

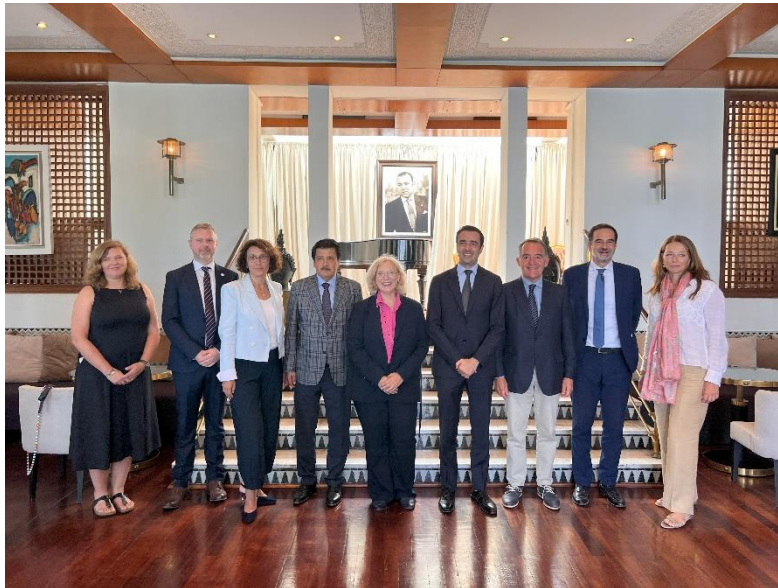
Ad-Hoc Committee on Migration
Field Visit to Morocco (Rabat, Tangier)
(18-21 September 2024)

REPORT



Prepared by the OSCE PA International Secretariat

7 October 2024



Cover photo: Delegation of the OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Migration with First Vice-President of the House of Representatives Mr. Mohamed Sibari, Rabat, 19 September 2024.

This page: Delegation of the OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Migration with Mr. Marouane Chbaattou, Member of the House of Representatives, Rabat, 19 September 2024.

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I. Executive Summary

From 19-20 September 2024, a delegation of nine members¹ of the OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Migration, led by its Chair, OSCE PA Vice-President Daniela De Ridder (MP, Germany), was hosted in Morocco by the Chamber of Representatives of the Moroccan Parliament. The purpose of this mission was to gain first-hand insight into Morocco's approach to managing migration flows, refugee support and the integration of migrants and refugees. The visits also sought to identify examples of 'best practice' – Morocco being the only country in the MENA region which has sought to enact significant migration and asylum reform – as well as areas where further support is needed.

The delegation met with a broad range of interlocutors in the capital Rabat on 19 September. On 20 September it travelled to the coastal city of Tangier, which serves as a strategic transit point for migrants seeking access to the European Union being situated only 14 km from the Strait of Gibraltar.

The key points highlighted in the discussions centred on emphasizing Morocco's strategic geographic role in migration flows between Europe, Africa, and the Middle East, migration and asylum reform undertaken since the adoption of the National Immigration and Asylum Strategy (SNIA) in 2014, the legal and institutional framework, and the challenges which Morocco faces as country of emigration, transit, and also increasingly destination. The delegation also learned more about initiatives to facilitate access to employment as well as the next steps needed to enhance refugee and migrant protection.

Particular attention was given to the treatment and procedures concerning vulnerable migrant groups, including unaccompanied minors, women, victims of human trafficking and gender-based violence, and LGBTI+ refugees.

This was the Committee's first visit to an OSCE Partner for Co-operation and follows up on recent visits to Italy (Rome, Lampedusa - March 2024) and Türkiye (Ankara, Adana, Gaziantep – May 2024) focusing on managing irregular migration in the Mediterranean.

II. Background

Morocco, situated at the crossroads of Africa and Europe, is a significant hub for migration, hosting a diverse population of migrants and refugees. According to the latest data from the United Nations, there were 102,358 foreigners residing in Morocco in 2020.

In recent years, Morocco's migration landscape has undergone substantial changes. Once primarily a country of emigration, it has since become both a crucial transit point – via the land routes of the western Mediterranean and the sea routes of the North Atlantic – and a destination point, particularly for migrants from sub-Saharan Africa. This influx

¹ In addition to the Chair, Dr. Daniela De Ridder (Germany), the delegation consisted of Committee Vice-Chairs Kemal Çelik (Türkiye) and Farah Karimi (The Netherlands), as well as members Alessandro Alfieri (Italy), Canan Bayram (Germany), Valérie Boyer (France), Johan Büser (Sweden), Lucie Potůčková (Czechia), and Artemi Vicent Rallo Lombarte (Spain).

includes refugees and asylum seekers fleeing conflict, persecution, and economic hardship in countries like Syria, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Mali. In 2023, Moroccan authorities reported hosting 8,244 refugees and 11,240 asylum seekers, highlighting the country's dual role as both a host and a transit nation.

In line with its international commitments and co-operation with the European Union, Morocco has entered into bilateral agreements to better manage migration flows. These agreements focus on combating human trafficking, strengthening border security, and facilitating the return of irregular migrants. Additionally, Morocco has prioritized regional development to address the root causes of migration by investing in education, healthcare, and economic opportunities in regions that typically send migrants.

However, despite these efforts, the country continues to face significant migratory challenges. To tackle these issues, the Moroccan government has implemented a comprehensive migration policy, the National Immigration and Asylum Strategy (SNIA), adopted in 2014, which aims to enhance the integration of immigrants and improve the management of migration flows through a coherent, comprehensive, humanitarian, and responsible policy.

III. Pre-visit Online Briefing with IGOS

Due to the limited time on the ground, an online briefing was held prior to the visit on 13 September with representatives of UNHCR, UNICEF, and IOM on Morocco's current migration and asylum situation. The key topics discussed included the country's role in regional migration, the challenges related to refugee documentation, child protection concerns, and the country's overall migration landscape.

Ms. Muriel JURAMIE, Senior Protection Officer at UNHCR in Rabat, highlighted Morocco's continued engagement in migration issues, including its participation in international forums and its reintegration into the African Union in 2017. Morocco has ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention, she underlined, and UNHCR is responsible for registering asylum seekers and for refugee status determination.

As of August 2024, UNHCR had registered 17,654 persons as asylum seekers and refugees, with 9,041 officially recognized as refugees and 8,613 still awaiting a decision by Moroccan authorities. Most are from West and Central Africa, with a significant portion also coming from Syria. One of the main challenges identified was the gap between those identified as refugees by UNHCR and those granted official ID cards by the Moroccan government: indeed, only 10 per cent of have received official refugee documentation.



UNHCR Morocco

Data as of 31 August 2024

Active Registered population

17,654

Active Individuals

12,239

Active cases

8,613

Asylum-seekers

9,041

Refugees

1.4

Average case size

4,455

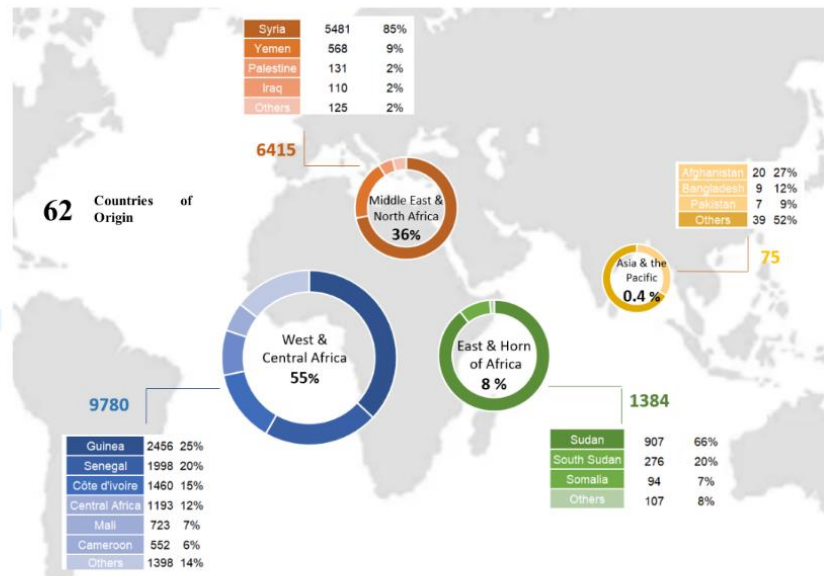
Individuals with specific needs

5,313

of Females

12,341

of Males



Ms. Juramie noted that while Morocco has expressed a willingness to improve the situation, the lack of an enacted asylum law remains an obstacle to the registration of asylum seekers. Despite the adoption of the National Immigration and Asylum Strategy (SNIA) in 2014, the legal framework for asylum has still not been put into place. Despite this, efforts are ongoing to improve the asylum process, including through expanding UNHCR’s presence in key cities such as Tangier, Nador, and Casablanca.

Ms. Karima Lahrach-Maynard, Child Protection Program Officer at UNICEF, focused on the vulnerabilities faced by children on the move, particularly unaccompanied minors. Morocco has had a National Policy on the Protection of Children since 2015, which is currently under review, with UNICEF collaborating on an operational plan. However, gaps remain in the child protection system, especially regarding children transitioning into adulthood as they may lose legal protection upon turning 18; the limited number of social workers to assist vulnerable children is also a challenge. The UNICEF representative also highlighted the challenges posed by children trying to cross into the Canary Islands where they must remain within the care of local authorities. UNICEF continues to advocate for scaling up protection services, improving the overall child protection framework for migrant and Moroccan children alike, and strengthening partnerships between NGOs and the government. The signing of a National Protocol for the Care of Vulnerable Children in May 2024 represented a significant milestone in this regard, enabling better collaboration between the government and NGOs to care for vulnerable children, including migrants.

Mr. Ilias Aridal, Coordinator for Protection and Assistance to Vulnerable Migrants at IOM Rabat, presented an overview of current migration trends. Morocco hosts 102,400 international migrants, he noted. He also drew attention to the marked increase in irregular migration in 2023 via both the Western Mediterranean and West African Atlantic routes. Morocco’s migration policy, which includes phases of regularization for

irregular migrants, has enabled many migrants to obtain legal status and thereby access basic services such as education, healthcare, and employment.

Despite these efforts, challenges remain, particularly in securing long-term accommodation for migrants without proper identification. IOM has been working with Moroccan authorities to establish reception centres and shelters for vulnerable migrants, including those currently excluded from the country's 200 existing centres, which only serve Moroccan citizens in need.

IOM is also supporting the reintegration of Moroccan migrants who are returning after failed migration attempts, providing mental health support and vocational training. However, additional services are needed to assist these vulnerable individuals, particularly younger migrants.

The briefing concluded with a discussion of key challenges. The absence of an asylum law and the gap in issuing official documentation to refugees were identified as significant obstacles. In March 2024, the Moroccan government took steps to address the backlog in refugee documentation, doubling the frequency of review sessions and extending the validity of ID cards, but more progress is required.

Data collection on migration is another challenge, with many figures being based on estimates. Improving co-ordination between agencies and developing more comprehensive data systems will be essential for better migration management, the interlocutors stressed. They also emphasized the importance of continued collaboration between the authorities, NGOs, and international organizations to address ongoing challenges and the need to enhance support for refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants.

IV. Parliamentary Interlocutors

On 19 September in Rabat, the OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Migration met with representatives from both chambers of parliament: the House of Representatives, represented by First Vice-President Mohamed SIBARI, and the House of Councillors, represented by First Vice-President Mohamed HANIN.

The delegation left with a deeper understanding of Morocco's multifaceted approach to migration management and the urgent need for continued collaboration between Morocco, the European Union, and other international partners.

1. House of Representatives



Mr. Mohamed SIBARI, First Vice-President of the House of Representatives, emphasized Morocco's efforts to safeguard the rights of migrants and refugees, positioning these principles as central to the Kingdom's migration policies. He recalled the regularization operations of 2014 and 2017, which sought to integrate migrants into Moroccan society and to ensure their rights, including access to education, health care and

all the other rights and privileges which Moroccan citizens enjoy. However, he acknowledged that managing migration remains a complex challenge due to Morocco's role as a country of origin, transit, and destination.

He stressed the crucial need for international co-operation in addressing migration, underlining that this is a shared responsibility requiring responsibility sharing and collaboration between all nations.

He also underlined the key role played by Morocco in managing migration flows, and efforts to guard the coasts and prevent irregular migration towards Europe. Mr. SIBARI also elaborated upon the reforms introduced through the 2013 National Immigration and Asylum Strategy, including law No. 27-14, which targets human trafficking and irregular migration. Trafficking in human beings is now a criminal offence rather than a misdemeanor, he noted. While these legal measures have helped, Mr. SIBARI noted that they are not sufficient by themselves and called for additional protective measures, coupled with broader international co-operation. The ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, economic disparities, and conflicts were cited as key factors driving migration and requiring a global response.



In response to questions from the OSCE PA delegation, Mr. SIBARI explained the challenges Morocco faces in creating employment opportunities for migrants, a situation

worsened by the global economic downturn, pandemic-related disruptions, inflation, and the aftermath of the Russia-Ukraine war. Delegation members asked how the EU could further assist Morocco, and suggested that Morocco could adopt measures to increase penalties for organized crime related to migration.

Mr. SIBARI reiterated that international co-operation is essential, and stressed the importance of addressing the root causes of migration – economic and political instability – rather than simply focusing on its symptoms. He further noted that while laws are necessary, they cannot solve the problem alone. Noting that no formal complaints have been lodged regarding asylum seekers in Morocco, he reiterated his confidence in the compliance of the country's migration and asylum policies with human rights commitments.

2. House of Councillors



Mr. Mohamed HANIN, First Vice-President of the House of Councillors, echoed many of the themes raised by his counterpart in the lower chamber. He outlined the structure and work of the House of Councillors, noting its shared responsibilities with the House of Representatives in addressing migration issues. He also emphasized the necessity of joint efforts and resources to tackle migration, particularly given the exacerbating effects of

climate change and regional conflicts.

Morocco faces an increasing influx of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa and is one of the primary destination countries in the MENA region. Despite these challenges, Mr. HANIN highlighted the country's commitment to managing migration in a comprehensive and sustainable manner. He provided data illustrating Morocco's efforts to reduce irregular migration towards Europe, including the rescue in 2023 of 17,000 migrants from drowning by the Moroccan coast guard.

In the following discussion, the fruitful co-operation between Morocco and Italy in combatting human trafficking and smuggling was recognized. Members also suggested further steps to ensure that migration occurs through regular channels.

In closing, Mr. HANIN informed the delegation about measures to counter 'brain drain', particularly in the medical sector, as Morocco is experiencing a significant shortage of healthcare professionals, requiring 32,000 doctors and 60,000 nurses. To address this gap, Morocco has initiated contracts with migrants to help fill these crucial positions.

V. Ministry Officials

Meetings were also held with representatives from three key ministries: the Ministry of the Interior; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan

Expatriates; and the Ministry of Economic Inclusion, Small Enterprises, Employment and Competences. These discussions provided valuable information on the Moroccan government's strategies and policies for dealing with migration, and on co-ordination between the various government bodies.

1. Ministry of Interior

Mr. Khalid ZEROUALI, *Wali*, Director of Migration and Border Surveillance at the Ministry of the Interior, provided an in-depth overview of Morocco's approach to migration management, emphasizing measures to promote the inclusion of migrants in the labour market and the broader strategic framework governing the country's migration policies.



Reaffirming Morocco's position as a country of origin, transit, and destination, which complicates its migration management efforts, he underscored the particular challenges of managing transit migration, noting that migrants and refugees often arrive with their minds focused on other destinations.

Mr. ZEROUALI stressed that migration should not be seen as a threat or a risk, but rather as an opportunity for enrichment – economically and socially. Indeed, Morocco's policy is based on a rights-based approach, balancing border management with the need to respect the humanity of migrants, he stressed. This has led to the development of a humanized border management framework, initiated through the Rabat Process, aimed at ensuring that first contact with migrants is handled with care. ZEROUALI furthermore stated that the nature of this initial interaction at the border often determines the trajectory of a migrant's experience. He also addressed challenges related to migrants lacking documentation.

The country's multilayer approach to border surveillance includes stringent border controls and co-ordination with transnational organizations, recognizing that security challenges, such as terrorism in the Sahel, are global and interconnected with migration. Despite these difficulties, he affirmed that Morocco has maintained safe borders, noting that there are very few terrorist acts. Authorities have intercepted approximately 75,000 individuals attempting to reach Europe each year and dismantled 3,000 criminal networks. In addition, between 14,000 and 15,000 migrants are rescued annually, particularly at sea.



The topic of repatriation was also addressed, with Mr. ZEROUALI emphasizing the importance of sustainable repatriation based on partnerships with several European countries, including Spain, France, Germany, Austria, Belgium, and The Netherlands, through a permanent migration group. This collaboration is based on transparency and efficiency, particularly in ensuring that repatriation is conducted fairly and sustainably. Mr. ZEROUALI outlined a three-phase process for repatriation: identification (led by the Ministry of Interior), issuance of laissez-passer documents, and return, which can sometimes include voluntary repatriation. He stressed that repatriation is not a taboo subject in Morocco and that these mechanisms are examples of successful international co-operation.

He also highlighted the use of advanced identification systems to enhance border management, including a robot-based system that ensures reliable identification of migrants. The delegation was assured that, even when fingerprint systems fail, Morocco has backup security identification measures in place.



During the question-and-answer session, participants asked about the possibility of broader agreements with the EU, beyond bilateral cooperation, to engage more effectively with Morocco. In response to concerns about the effectiveness of identification systems, Mr. ZEROUALI reiterated the robustness of Morocco's security measures. He also emphasized that Morocco strives to integrate human rights into every aspect of its migration policies.

In conclusion, Mr. ZEROUALI underlined Morocco's holistic approach to migration, balancing security, humanitarian concerns, and international co-operation. The emphasis on humanized border management, sustainable repatriation, and transnational partnerships reflects a comprehensive strategy aimed at addressing both the challenges and the opportunities presented by migration in a complex global landscape. Upcoming meetings in October between Morocco and France, Germany, and The Netherlands, further highlight its commitment to continued collaboration on this critical topic.

2. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates



The delegation met with a representative of another key ministry: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation, and Moroccan Expatriates. Mr. Fouad KADMIRI, Director of Consular and Social Affairs, provided an overview of Morocco's foreign policy regarding migration and asylum. He emphasized Morocco's proactive efforts to regularize refugees from Africa in 2014 and 2017, allowing them access to rights and free services, showcasing the country's commitment to humane migration policies. This approach aligns with Morocco's broader international co-operation efforts, including its leadership in initiatives such as the "Rabat Process"², fostering co-operation between Africa and the EU, and the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration in Marrakech in 2018. In this context, Morocco has furthermore developed 23 examples of 'best practice' he underlined.

The discussions also touched on how Morocco navigates relationships with countries that lack recognized governments or administrations.

In response to a question about racism and xenophobia towards migrants and refugees in Morocco, Mr. KADMIRI stressed that migration is a shared global challenge that requires collective responsibility and highlighted Morocco's significant actions in refugee protection. Some stereotypes were also demystified on the basis of shared data showing that 85 per cent of African migration remains in Africa. In fact, Côte d'Ivoire hosts the largest number (25 per cent) of African migrants and refugees.



One Member called for greater pressure on EU governments to address migration challenges collectively, emphasizing that Morocco, like many countries, faces common challenges but should not be singled out or blamed.

² The Euro-African Dialogue on Migration and Development (Rabat Process) is a regional migration dialogue. Since 2006, the Dialogue has offered a framework for consultation, bringing together countries of origin, transit and destination of the migration routes linking Central, West and Northern Africa with Europe. 57 state partners and additional key stakeholders, including the European Union (EU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), are involved. <https://www.rabat-process.org/en/about>.

3. Ministry of Economic Inclusion, Small Enterprises, Employment and Competences

The primary focus of the meeting with Minister Younes SEKKOURI was Morocco's ongoing efforts to manage labour migration through its National Strategy for International Professional Mobility, a policy aimed at mitigating 'brain drain' while strengthening Morocco's labour market and ensuring the protection of its workers abroad.



A key component of Morocco's approach is circular migration, which allows skilled workers to temporarily migrate to partner countries, particularly within Europe, to gain professional experience and training before returning to contribute to the Moroccan economy. Minister SEKKOURI emphasized that this framework is designed to balance the professional and personal aspirations of migrants. Circular migration agreements, e.g. with Spain, have facilitated structured

migration, ensuring that Moroccan workers benefit from regulated conditions while acquiring valuable skills. The main objectives of the National Strategy were further explained during the discussion. First, it aims to boost Morocco's labour market by enabling migrants to return with enhanced technical skills, thus addressing long-term economic needs. Second, it seeks to establish clear administrative processes and points of contact to ensure efficient support for migrants throughout their journey. Finally, the strategy stresses the protection of workers' rights, which is embedded in bilateral agreements with receiving countries to safeguard labour conditions, social benefits, and the right of return.

Minister SEKKOURI also highlighted the importance of vertical integration in this strategy, which requires co-ordinated efforts between various stakeholders, including the government, the private sector, and international partners. A central pillar is vocational training, where selected migrants receive industry-specific training prior to departure. These programmes, funded by both Moroccan and international resources, ensure that workers are well-prepared to meet the labour demands of receiving countries. Upon their return, these individuals are expected to apply their new expertise to Morocco's economy, creating a win-win situation for both countries.



The strategy follows a four-step process to ensure its successful implementation. First, it focuses on identifying quality migration channels, aligning Morocco's labour supply with the demands of partner countries. Second, it provides continuous quality support to migrants through legal, social, and professional assistance. Third, it emphasizes the need for inter-agency dialogue within Morocco, ensuring that all government entities involved in migration management co-ordinate effectively. Finally, it fosters inter-sectional dialogue with private employers, educational institutions, and civil society to address broader challenges and opportunities in migration.

Partnerships with the EU have been critical to Morocco's success in managing circular migration. One notable initiative is the THAMM programme, which was praised for its role in facilitating professional mobility for thousands of migrants. Building on this success, the Moroccan government has worked on a THAMM Plus programme, which aims to further refine the processes and expand the scope of circular migration. These EU-funded initiatives have been crucial in developing sustainable frameworks for labour migration that benefit both Moroccan workers and European economies.



The financing of these migration programs was a key topic of discussion. Minister SEKKOURI explained that the budget for vocational training and migrant support is a joint effort, combining Moroccan resources with significant contributions from the EU. Adequate funding is vital for both the pre-departure training and the re-integration of returning migrants, ensuring long-term benefits for Morocco's labour market.

VI. Other Meetings

To complement the meetings with authorities the Committee also met with representatives of the National Human Rights Council, the African Migration Observatory, and the Orient-Occident Foundation in Rabat.

1. National Human Rights Council³



The meeting with Morocco's National Human Rights Council (CNDH) provided insight into the organization's ongoing efforts to protect and promote human rights, particularly in the context of migration. Established in 2011, the CNDH operates as an independent institution under constitutional authority, aligning with international standards such as the Paris Declaration. It plays a key role in advocating for social justice and

addressing human rights concerns at both the national and international levels. The Council has been actively involved in national reforms aimed at enhancing rights protections, with a special focus on the rights of migrants and refugees.

During the meeting, the latest events regarding irregular migration attempts at the border with the Spanish territory of Ceuta were addressed, highlighting that 152 individuals have been prosecuted for allegedly organizing irregular migration, while approximately 3,000 people had attempted to cross the border. CNDH President Amina BOUAYACH emphasized the difficulties in verifying whether these migration waves were foreign-organized but noted a shift in the use of social media to mobilize young people. An investigation into inhuman and degrading treatment has been opened, she informed the delegation.

Recently, the CNDH has collaborated with its 12 regional committees to listen to migrant stories and assess border management. While no evidence of discrimination was found, she raised concerns about unaccompanied minors. There is currently no systematic process for reuniting them with their families, with only a few being placed in protective institutions. This lack of transparency from Moroccan authorities was noted as a challenge to understanding the full scope of the issue.



In the ensuing discussion, the question of minority rights, particularly regarding the LGBTI+ community and refugees fleeing persecution based on their sexual orientation

³ <https://www.cndh.ma/en>

was raised. The CNDH President explained that while public discussions about LGBTI+ rights have increased and law enforcement intervenes in cases of violence, there is still no legal recognition of same-sex relationships in Morocco. The issue of female genital mutilation and the high costs migrants face when attempting to cross borders were also raised.

The discussion underscored the CNDH's ongoing efforts to address a wide range of human rights challenges, particularly in the context of migration, while highlighting the limitations and areas where further progress is needed.

2. African Migration Observatory⁴



The meeting with representatives from the African Migration Observatory (AMO) offered key insights into the organization's mission and ongoing efforts to enhance migration governance across the African continent. AMO was established in Rabat as part of Morocco's role as Champion of Migration within the African Union (AU). The Observatory's current mandate focuses on producing high-quality, harmonized migration data, building the capacity of AU

Member States, and improving migration governance through enhanced coordination and partnerships. By developing a centralized source of migration data, AMO aims to support evidence-based migration policies and strengthen the continent's knowledge base on migration and mobility.

Key initiatives discussed included tailored capacity-building programs and a "Training of Trainers" approach to empower local stakeholders in migration data management. The development of a standardized glossary for migration terminology and the monitoring of migration flows were also highlighted as critical for improving the accuracy and harmonization of data. One notable project is the AU-UMA Migration Data Hub, a pilot initiative aimed at centralizing migration data in the Arab Maghreb region, with potential scalability to other regional economic communities (RECs).

Workshops from 2022-2024 have been held in key locations such as Cairo, Lomé, and Marrakech, focusing on enhancing migration data competence and policy formulation.



⁴ <https://aom.au.int/index.php/en/about>

These efforts also align with AMO's participation in international forums like the United Nations General Assembly and COP conferences.

The discussion touched upon the root causes of migration and the essential role of accurate data in addressing irregular migration. It was again noted that 85 per cent of migration within Africa occurs remains within the continent, providing valuable insights into migration dynamics. Participants expressed concerns about the willingness of governments to share their data, and whether this reluctance poses a significant challenge for the Observatory. In response, it was highlighted that the Observatory is working to balance data sharing with ownership while ensuring data security, which complicates efforts to establish a comprehensive data-sharing framework. This dialogue emphasized the necessity of reliable data and collaborative approaches in formulating effective migration policies. Ultimately, the meeting underscored the Observatory's pivotal role in enhancing Africa's migration governance through capacity building, data harmonization, and fostering partnerships among stakeholders.

3. Orient-Occident Foundation⁵



The final meeting of the day at the Orient-Occident Foundation (FOO) provided a valuable opportunity for the delegation to engage directly with migrants and refugees and to learn about their experiences firsthand.

Established in 1994 in Morocco, this is a non-profit organization focused on promoting intercultural dialogue and supporting vulnerable populations, particularly refugees and migrants.

Initially founded to strengthen ties between Eastern and Western cultures, it has gradually adapted to current challenges, especially those related to migration and integration. The Foundation's primary objective is to facilitate the integration of migrants and refugees in Morocco while fostering inter-cultural dialogue. It also strives to support marginalized individuals through education, vocational training, economic inclusion programs, and cultural activities. With a presence in several Moroccan cities, the Foundation offers various services, including legal assistance, psychological support, language training, and skills development, as well as cultural activities aimed at promoting coexistence between different communities. It collaborates with national and international partners to implement programs designed to ease the integration of migrants and refugees.

⁵ <https://www.orient-occident.org/>



Members had the opportunity to witness a variety of these activities, including a market operated by refugees and migrants, which showcased their entrepreneurial initiatives. Following this, the delegation explored support facilities, including a radio station and a free school led by a former refugee, both of which highlighted the diverse programmes aimed at fostering community integration.

A young Congolese entrepreneur who had fled the war explained how he had successfully established a clothing brand with the Foundation's support. A short film detailing the Foundation's creation was then screened, leading into a Q&A session where FOO President Yasmina FILALI and her team discussed their programmes, shared 'best practices', and outlined their expertise in migration management. The visit concluded with another market featuring textiles crafted by refugee women who had received vocational training from the Foundation.

Overall, this visit highlighted the Foundation's important contribution in providing shelter and support to vulnerable refugees as well as in facilitating vocational training and access to the labour market.



VII. Tangier Med Port Authority



The following day, the strategic importance of the city of Tangier was underscored as the delegation visited one of two ports in Tangier: the port of Tangier Med, situated just 14 km from the Strait of Gibraltar.

Tangier Med opened in 2007 and serves as a vital hub for trade between Europe, Africa, and other global markets. With state-of-the-

art facilities, the port accommodates large container ships, handling 20 per cent of global maritime traffic and ranking first in Africa and third worldwide after Rotterdam and Antwerp.

As a significant maritime hub, the port not only facilitates extensive trade between continents but also serves as a potential transit point for migrants seeking to enter the EU. This dual function invites critical discussions with on-site interlocutors on how the port's operations might intersect with migration policies and management strategies in the region.

One key takeaway was the direct impact of Tangier Med on local employment opportunities. Indeed, the port's development has had a profound impact on the regional economy, generating over 110,000 jobs in both the port and surrounding industrial zones. This surge in employment has revitalized the area. The vast majority of these jobs are occupied by Moroccan nationals.



Security at the port was another topic addressed, with concerns raised about the potential for migrant flows passing through the hub. Delegates were assured that the port is equipped with advanced surveillance systems, ensuring that all shipments are thoroughly inspected at multiple checkpoints. The strict security measures are further supported by the fact that the port has a single point of entry, making unauthorized entry more challenging.

Additionally, the implementation of a cutting-edge chip-based traceability system for cargo not only increases security but also ensures real-time tracking of shipments, minimizing the risk of illegal entries. As a result, it was noted that no migrants currently pass through this facility, underscoring its effectiveness in controlling movement.

VIII. Concluding Observations

This visit provided a unique opportunity for the OSCE PA's Ad Hoc Committee on Migration to learn more about the efforts of the Moroccan authorities to implement migration and asylum reform.

Morocco has increasingly become a country of long-term settlement. The authorities are working hand in hand with international governmental organizations and other stakeholders to provide refugees access to basic services and to grant thousands of migrants legal status through successive regularisation campaigns.

One of the 'lessons learned' of this visit was the positive approach of Moroccan officials to migration, with a focus on the positive opportunities offered by **international mobility**, rather than on challenges. Their pro-active approach to addressing the issue of 'brain drain' through initiatives to boost circular migration through a national strategy for professional international mobility and support for entrepreneurship was particularly noteworthy.

We, too, should strive to **reframe the migration issue** within our own countries, adopting a positive approach that emphasizes the contributions and opportunities of international mobility. This is essential for encouraging constructive discussions about migration.

A key message communicated to us by a number of our interlocutors was that solidarity, co-operation and co-ordination should be the key guiding principles in addressing irregular migration. Indeed, we cannot continue to let a handful of countries bear responsibility for irregular migration.

We also need to seriously boost international efforts to address the root causes of migration such as conflict, persecution, and also increasingly, the impacts of climate change.

Despite the efforts undertaken since 2014, significant gaps remain in Morocco's protection system for people on the move, in particular vulnerable migrants. Moroccan citizens, especially, unaccompanied minors, who return to their country after a failed migration attempt also need additional support. It is therefore our hope that the goodwill of the authorities will be supported by the adoption of a robust legal framework for asylum and for guaranteeing the protection of the human rights of all refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in the country, so that Morocco can continue to serve as an example of 'best practice' in the region and beyond.

ANNEX 1 - PRESS RELEASE

In visit to Morocco, OSCE PA migration committee learns about the country's approach to international mobility

RABAT, 21 September 2024 – Wrapping up a two-day visit to Morocco, a delegation of nine members of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Ad Hoc Committee on Migration, led by its Chair, Dr. Daniela De Ridder (Germany), commended the country for its efforts to enact asylum and migration reform. At the same time, there is a need to see the reforms through in particular by adopting a comprehensive legislative framework, the delegation said.

The visit, hosted by the House of Representatives of the Moroccan parliament, marked the first time that the committee traveled to an OSCE Partner for Co-operation to gain first-hand insight into its approach to managing migration flows, refugee protection and the integration of migrants and refugees.

Meeting with a wide range of stakeholders, the delegation learned about Morocco's challenges as a country of emigration, transit and destination, as well as its strategic position at the heart of migration flows between Europe, Africa and the Middle East. The official interlocutors underlined Morocco's efforts to prevent irregular migration towards Europe and countering trafficking in human beings and migrant smuggling. The critical importance of international co-operation and joint efforts to tackle the root causes of migration including conflict, climate change and economic disparities were also emphasized.

"Morocco is leading the way as the only country in the MENA region which has embarked upon significant asylum and migration reform since the adoption of the National Strategy on Immigration and Asylum in 2013," De Ridder said. "We can draw inspiration from Morocco's approach to international mobility as an opportunity to be built upon rather than a threat. It has also made significant efforts to regularize the situation of thousands of migrants.

De Ridder noted however that currently only about ten per cent of asylum seekers identified by the UNHCR receive official refugee status. She stressed the need to implement a legal framework to ensure a more effective asylum system and more widespread access to health care, employment and education. The delegation also emphasized the need to enhance protection for vulnerable migrants notably unaccompanied minors, victims of trafficking in human beings and gender based violence as well as LGBTI+ refugees.

Examples of best practice in the area of access to employment were also shared, such as initiatives to address 'brain drain' and boost circular migration through a national strategy for professional international mobility and support for entrepreneurship.

Participants also learned about bilateral mechanisms in place to promote sustainable returns as well as the need to expand reintegration support for Moroccan returnees.

In Rabat on Thursday the delegation met with key stakeholders including Mohamed Sibari, First Vice-President of the House of Representatives, Mohamed Hanin, First Vice-President of the House of Councillors, Khalid Zerouali, Director of Migration and Border Surveillance at the Ministry of the Interior, Younes Sekkouri, Minister of Economic Inclusion, Small Enterprises, Employment and Competences, Amina Bouayach, President of the National Council on Human Rights, as well as representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates.

The delegation also met with representatives of the African Migration Observatory and the Orient-Occident Foundation and was also briefed online in advance of the visit by representatives of UNHCR, UNICEF and IOM.

On Friday, the delegation visited Tangier MED port authority, a hub for global trade and investment that has played a crucial role in providing local opportunities with the creation of 110,000 jobs since its establishment.

In addition to Chair De Ridder, the delegation consisted of Committee Vice-Chairs Kemal Çelik (Türkiye) and Farah Karimi (The Netherlands), as well as members Alessandro Alfieri (Italy), Canan Bayram (Germany), Valérie Boyer (France), Johan Büser (Sweden), Lucie Potůčková (Czechia), and Artemi Vicent Rallo Lombarte (Spain).

This week's mission follows up on visits of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration earlier this year to Türkiye (Ankara, Adana, Gaziantep) and Italy (Rome, Lampedusa) focusing on addressing irregular migration in the Mediterranean and enhancing the protection of migrants and refugees with a focus on vulnerable categories.

ANNEX 2 - FINAL PROGRAMME

OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Migration Field Visit to Morocco (19-20 September 2024)

Final Programme

Thursday, 19 September

- 10:00 Mr. Mohamed SIBARI, First Vice-President of the House of Representatives (as well as Mr. Najib EL KHADI, Secretary General of the House of Representatives, and Mr. Amal BENCAID, Director of External Relations and International Cooperation)
- 11:00 Mr. Mohamed HANIN, First Vice-President of the House of Councillors (as well as Mr. El Assad ZEROUALI, Secretary General of the House of Councillors, Mr. Saad GHAZI, Director of External Relations and Communication, and Ms. Souad HAMAMI, Director of the Communication Department).
- 12:00 Mr. Khalid ZEROUALI, *Wali*, Director of Migration and Border Surveillance, Ministry of the Interior
- 13:00 Lunch in honour of the OSCE PA Delegation with the participation of Members of the Delegation of Morocco to the OSCE PA (Royal Nautical Club of Salé)
- Mr. Marouane CHBAATTOU, Member of the Delegation of Morocco to the OSCE PA
- 15:00 Mr. Fouad KADMIRI, Director of Consular and Social Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates
- 16:00 Ms. Amina BOUAYACH, President of the National Council on Human Rights
- 17:00 Mr. Younes SEKKOURI, Minister of Economic Inclusion, Small Enterprises, Employment and Competences
- 18:00 Representatives of the African Migration Observatory:
- Ms. Heba FIKRY BASSILY, Chargé d'Affaires
 - Mr. Leith ZEINELABIDINE, Training and Capacity-Building Manager
 - Ms. Sanâa KIADI, Training and Capacity-Building Manager
 - Mr. Abdelsadick Mahamat BRAHIM, Legal Expert on Migration Issues
- 19:00 Ms. Yasmina FILALI, President, Orient-Occident Foundation

Friday, 20 September

- 08:50 Departure of high-speed train to Tangier
- 10:10 Arrival in Tangier
- 11:00 Visit of Tanger Med port authority
Lunch
- 16:00 Return to Rabat by high-speed train
- 17:20 Arrival in Rabat
Debrief

ANNEX 3 - COMPOSITION OF THE DELEGATION

Members of the OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Migration:

1. Dr. Daniela DE RIDDER (MP, Germany), Chair, Vice-President of the OSCE PA
2. Mr. Kemal ÇELİK (MP Türkiye), Vice-Chair
3. Ms. Farah KARIMI (MP, Netherlands), Vice-Chair
4. Mr. Alessandro ALFIERI (MP, Italy)
5. Ms. Canan BAYRAM (MP, Germany)
6. Ms. Valerie BOYER (MP, France)
7. Mr. Johan BÜSER (MP, Sweden)
8. Ms. Lucie POTŮČKOVÁ (MP, Czechia)
9. Mr. Artemi Vicent RALLO (MP, Spain)

Staff:

10. Ms. Farimah DAFTARY, Senior Advisor, OSCE PA International Secretariat
11. Ms. Manon DESCAMPS, Research Assistant, OSCE PA International Secretariat
12. Ms. Ecem Danik GOKCE, Secretary of the Turkish Delegation
13. Ms. Dilek DEMIRKOL, Staff of the Turkish Delegation (interpreter)
14. Mr. Jean-Luc BLOUET, Secretary of the French Delegation