

**Address by the President of the House of Councilors,  
Mr Hakim Benchammach,  
at the 18th Autumn Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of  
the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe**

**Friday, October 4, 2019, Marrakech**

**Dear Sir / Madam,**

It is an honour for me to participate in the opening of the 18th Autumn Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which our Council is honored to host, and which is devoted to examining the prospects for work on a number of issues of common interest at the Mediterranean level and, first and foremost, mutual and participatory cooperation for security and sustainable stability.

I would first like to congratulate our Parliamentary Assembly for its efforts in the service of peace, security and the principles of intercultural dialogue and understanding, with a view to resolving and containing the problems affecting the region of the Mediterranean, eliminating the causes of tension and the resulting threat to peace and security, and promoting economic, social and environmental cooperation and the management of migratory flow, as well as the resulting pressure for asylum applications in the region.

The autumn session of our Parliamentary Assembly is taking place in a particular context, in which Mediterranean countries are confronted with a set of common challenges related to the fight against terrorism and the search for ways of combating violent extremism and hate speech in light of the alarming development of the phenomenon of foreign fighters. We are here to analyze and study our collective contribution to meeting the challenge countries on both shores of the Mediterranean are faced with, as well as the rest of the world, and which lies mainly in the decline of economic efficiency and social immunity in the face of the worsening effects of climate change, which augures many disasters to come at all levels.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The fight against terrorism at the regional level is one of the most daunting challenges, for the resolution of which we must cooperate in the light of the priorities and the methodological framework of national, regional and global counter-terrorism policies, as defined in the relevant resolutions of the Security

Council, including Security Council resolution 2178 (2014) of 24 September 2014 (S / RES / 2178 (2014)). As parliaments, we must give priority to bilateral and regional cooperation in the fight against terrorism, and to building an enabling legislative framework, particularly in the fields of security, judicial cooperation, and exchange of experience and information, as well as through effective legislative responses and public policies that are conducive to the social inclusion of vulnerable groups, which are most at risk of marginalization, intolerance and religious extremism. Such an effort should focus on employment policies and social justice, including strengthening the supply of education and training, as well as programs to combat hate speech, racism and extremism, which is essential for the eradication of the structural causes of terrorism.

We, Moroccan parliamentarians, are convinced, given our national experience in proactively combatting terrorism, and after a preliminary assessment of ten years of commitment, that the concerted policy efforts of religious restructuring that His Majesty the King personally supervises in his capacity as the Commander of the Believers, are a consecration of the core values of tolerant Islam. In addition, the concern for proper guidance, and the voluntary and progressive soul-searching by a number of former convicts for terrorism, as well as the process of revision of religious education textbooks are all initiatives that, if considered within a comprehensive strategy, can be seen as part of a specific Moroccan approach to terrorism prevention policies, an approach that is grounded in strong constitutional safeguards and a strong international convention.

More generally, it is worth mentioning here those pessimistic strategic studies, according to which the total and definitive eradication of terrorism would be out of our reach. Not because the phenomenon has marked many and various stages of our history, but mainly for reasons related to the current global contexts, which increases our responsibilities in addressing this scourge.

Today, the question is to what extent we can achieve significant results in this necessary confrontation without referring to the difficulty of disarming the terrorist groups involved in geo-strategic rivalries and conflicts, and without mentioning the link between international terrorism and unbridled globalization, the scourge of dictatorship and authoritarian regimes, the resurgence of social unrest or natural disasters in Africa and Asia, or the hegemonic power of Western culture at the expense of local cultures, international balances and the difficult reconciliation of the vital interests of nations, or finally the theory of creative chaos that puts many countries at the mercy of the great powers that support them...

However, just as diseases in their various manifestations require remedies and a medical research effort, our responsibility obliges us to scale up innovation and experience sharing, so that we may overcome the phenomenon of terrorism, from which no state or people is immune today.

In this respect, besides our conviction that we need constant vigilance in terms of security and an exchange of experiences in this field, we are also convinced that it is possible to have significant, even decisive, victories over the phenomenon of terrorism, provided that methodical choices are made to address the root causes for this phenomenon.

The issue is one of fighting against separatist trends in Africa and the countries of the Middle East and South-East Asia, putting an end to any attempt of balkanization of these regions, doing away with ethnic conflict and sectarian and ideological hatred, finding a just solution to the Palestinian cause, reducing the conditions leading to poverty, vulnerability and social inequality, in addition to the judicious and vigilant treatment of the issue of combatant returnees and their families, and the resolution of humanitarian issues related to jihadists in prison. In particular, this involves building the rule of law and institutions, and spreading the culture of human rights, fundamental freedoms and justice and equality, so as to erect an impassable buffer against extremism.

In a related context, I would like to recall two essential elements which, in my view, should challenge us as a parliamentary association in the fight against terrorism and regional cooperation in the face of this regional and global threat, two elements we cannot afford to overlook, the values produced by our Mediterranean civilizations from time immemorial, namely freedom, democracy, human rights, tolerance and coexistence.

The first element relates to the fourth pillar of the United Nations Integrated Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which states that human rights must be respected and protected in the context of counter-terrorism. The second element concerns "human security" as defined in resolution no. 290-66 of the United Nations General Assembly dated 10 September 2012 and resolution no. 291-64 of July 16, 2010, and as elaborated in the multiple reports of the UN Secretary-General as a structured conceptual framework for anti-terrorism policies based on human rights. We are, moreover, called upon, as legislators and governments, to design and implement anti-terrorism legislation in order to meet the increasingly pressing expectations in this area.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Allow me to share with you briefly some key axioms of the debate on environmental issues, economic development and the fight against the effects of climate change in the Mediterranean. According to the IPCC, our Mediterranean region will experience a sharp rise in temperature, with rates varying between 2.2 and 5.1 degrees between 2080 and 2100, and rainfall will decrease by around 4% in some regions and 27% elsewhere. We must all shoulder our responsibilities towards future generations, and urgently identify innovative solutions and strategies to protect our region from climate collapse.

In this context, I would like to seize the opportunity of this joint reflection among legislators to recall the organic link between the fight against climate change and the mitigation of its effects and the objectives of sustainable development by 2030, in particular Goal 7 "Ensuring affordable access to reliable and sustainable modern energy services for all", Goal 11 "Making cities and human settlements Inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable", Goal 12 "Sustainable consumption and production patterns", target 13 calling for "Urgent action to address climate change and its effects", and goal 14 on "Conservation of the oceans and seas, marine resources and their sustainable use in the pursuit of sustainable development ". It is also worth recalling here the need to discuss the Guiding Principles on Business and Trade and Human Rights adopted by the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2011 as a framework for addressing trade and investment issues from the perspective of human rights and sustainable development, knowing that the legislative dimension plays a decisive role in the effective reach of these directives in the national laws of the member countries of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

I would also like to take this opportunity to remind you of the need to draw inspiration from the parliamentary action plan on climate change of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, drafted on the occasion of the meeting held by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the French Parliament on December 5 and 6, 2015 in Paris.

In the same vein, allow me to quote the diagnosis of His Majesty King Mohammed VI on the current state of our planet. In his royal message to the participants of the eighth Islamic Conference of Ministers of the Environment, inaugurated Wednesday, October 2, 2019 in Rabat under the theme "Role of cultural and religious factors in the protection of the environment and sustainable development", His Majesty pointed out that *"Environment issues and sustainable development have become one of the major challenges facing the world. Numerous studies and international research have shown an unprecedented depletion of natural resources, a dramatic increase in pollution and a profound disruption of the global environmental balance, with the adverse effects of this worrying, even dangerous situation that our planet is experiencing today, namely the obvious negative effects on the economy, society*

*and health. "This situation poses unavoidable risks for all the countries of the world, but especially for the most fragile amongst them."*

*And His Majesty to insist: "The resolution of urgent environmental problems, the negative effects of which run across political and geographical frontiers, can only be achieved in close co-operation between States. No nation, whatever its capabilities, can face these problems alone. "*

End of quote.

**Dear Sir / Madam,**

As you know, there are many hotbeds of tension, conflict and struggle in our region, making it a source and space for refugees and migrants. In this regard, the reports of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are alarming, and warn of the catastrophic humanitarian situation resulting from migratory movements and the growing numbers of refugees in many Middle Eastern countries and North Africa, including Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya, because of armed conflict, instability, and the grave security situation further complicating the plight of internally displaced persons.

In addition to persecution and conflict, we must not lose sight of natural disasters (sometimes as a result of climate change) that have forced and will force people to migrate, to move away in search of refuge in other countries, in the context of what is now known as "climate asylum". There are, of course, other man-made disasters, such as social and economic deprivation, which prompt the majority of people to leave their home countries and will continue to do so in future absent other options to incite them to stay and live with dignity in their own country.

Therefore, dealing with the problem of migration and refugees is no longer an issue of analysis and diagnosis, but requires courageous decisions deeply rooted in the values of universal human consciousness.

Here we can refer to the Moroccan initiative to regularize the legal situation of a number of immigrants living in the Kingdom. Indeed, our country, on royal instruction, has been implementing an exceptional immigration policy since 2014, opening the door to the regularization of the administrative situation of migrants on its territory.

**Dear Sir / Madam,**

The countries of the Mediterranean region are facing a series of economic challenges, mainly related to the consequences of the global economic crisis or the political transformations experienced by some countries in the region in the aftermath of 2011. There are also striking inequalities between the northern and

southern shores, equivalent to about a quarter of a century in terms of development; and the main challenge is to think of ways and means to reduce this economic and social gap between the two shores of the Mediterranean, based on a methodology involving cooperation and win-win partnership.

Une telle approche est de nature à contribuer à la résolution d'une grande partie des problèmes de la région. We must invest in youth, which is the most important reservoir of wealth in our region, and unleash the development potential of our countries, especially since young people under 30 represent 60% of the population of the Mediterranean region. We are therefore called upon to capitalize on the region's demographic dividend by creating a new generation of policies and strategies conducive to youth economic empowerment. We also call for the adoption of a special methodology for the 15 to 24 age group, given the importance of a successful transition from childhood to youth, and to ensure youth access to appropriate care and training for effective integration into society and the future.

The best approach to peace and security is to promote the economic well-being of peoples in a sustainable and effective way. This will only be possible through the combined efforts of all stakeholders, and first and foremost parliamentary institutions, as part of their inherent constitutional roles, and as part of their contribution as effective and credible proponents.

We also invite you to consider the creation of a "Mediterranean parliamentary mechanism of cooperation for economic well-being", as a space for discussion and production of ideas to step up co-operation between the two shores of the Mediterranean, in the service of economic well-being of the peoples of the region.

We also point out the deep transformation of our world under the effect of the "fourth industrial revolution", which will make digitalization and artificial intelligence essential levers for the creation of wealth and positive positioning. We are therefore called upon to take the necessary steps to equip each country with the capabilities it needs to better negotiate the future through close cooperation, sharing of experience and expertise, and the transfer of knowledge.

In the same vein, cybersecurity and protection mechanisms need to be strengthened to combat, on the one hand, growing cyberterrorism and to protect children and young people from hate speech and extremism on social networks and websites, on the other.

**Dear Sir / Madam,**

Over the past two decades, the international community has sought to counter violent extremism, mainly in the context of security-related counterterrorism measures aimed at countering the threat posed by Al-Qaida and its affiliated groups. However, with the advent of a new generation of groups, there is a growing international consensus that these anti-terrorism measures have fallen short from preventing the spread of violent extremism.

His Majesty King Mohammed VI has already set out the vision and philosophy of the Kingdom of Morocco in the fight against terrorism, extremism, and the responsibility of the international community. *His Majesty, in his speech at the 69th session of the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 2016, stressed that " the world today is at a crossroads. The international community must help developing countries to progress and to ensure security and stability in their regions. Otherwise, all of us will bear the consequences of the growing trends towards extremism, violence and terrorism, fueled by a sense of injustice and exclusion, of which no country will be safe around I am convinced that the growing awareness of the international community of transnational threats, arising from the weakness of human and sustainable development, in addition to faith in a common destiny of peoples, will have a major impact on the awakening of world consciousness for a safer, more equitable and more humane world."* End of quote.

Hence, we are increasingly convinced and aware that the consequences of the resurgence of extremism, intolerance, hatred, violence and terrorism are compelling us, today more than ever before, to coordinate parliamentary efforts across the region. I would like here to emphasize three fundamental points:

- - The success of any national plan to combat violent extremism will be relevant only if it integrates the security, spiritual, educational and social levels in the fight against the phenomenon of violent extremism and intolerance;
- - The urgent need to closely monitor the patterns of renewal, adaptation and change that terrorist organizations are constantly using in the field of cyberterrorism, and the need to update and renew counterterrorism strategies and policies on all fronts;
- - The urgent need to tackle the development of a parliamentary charter on the role and responsibilities of parliaments in combating violent extremism as a reference framework for national parliaments in the region. The exercise would consist in strengthening the role of legislation, and monitoring and evaluating public policies in the following areas: Fight against all the forms of discrimination, social

justice and policies of fight against poverty, integration of the most vulnerable groups, reinforcement of the legislation on the protection of the human rights, prevention of radical tendencies in prisons, fight against hate speech and protection of cultural diversity. It is also about ensuring that the peoples of the region enjoy a new generation of economic and social rights.

**Dear Sir / Madam,**

To conclude, allow me to hope that our work will make everyone realize that, beyond the security and geopolitical threats and challenges, whether related to terrorism or to the spread of hate and culture of extremism and intolerance, there is an even more serious challenge, namely the appalling predominance of a state of uncertainty in much of the Mediterranean region.

I believe that our shared responsibilities as parliaments are to act with caution in our fight against terrorism, to create conditions that are conducive to the realization of the legitimate right of peoples to stability, peace, development, democracy and dignity, and to develop policies that will at least mitigate the state of uncertainty in our region.

Thanks for listening.