

Full text of Royal Speech to Nation on 40th Anniversary of Green March

Praise be to God

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

Dear Citizens,

The commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the Green March is no ordinary event or passing celebration. In fact, it is a watershed moment in the process to complete the Kingdom's territorial integrity.

Following the epic achievement of liberating our land and shoring up peace and security, our country has sought to enable the Saharan populations to become full-fledged citizens and enjoy a dignified life.

Today, 40 years after the Green March, and regardless of the advantages and the downsides, we want to make a radical break with the manner in which Sahara issues have been dealt with so far: a break with the rentier economy and privileges, a break with poor private sector involvement and a break with the mentality of centralized administration.

Why today, 40 years later?

Well, after years of sacrifice and political and development-oriented efforts, we have reached maturity.

Conditions are now ripe for the dawn of a new era in the process to consolidate national unity and achieve full integration of our southern provinces into the motherland.

The implementation of the Development Model for the Southern Provinces and the application of advanced regionalization are part of that process.

Dear Citizens,

I am keen to make sure we provide our fellow citizens in the southern provinces with all the necessary means to enable them to manage their own affairs and show they are capable of developing their region.

From time immemorial, the Saharan populations have been known as scholars and seasoned tradespeople. They have always earned their living by the sweat of their brow and lived with dignity and pride. They do not expect assistance from anyone, despite their harsh living conditions.

I am talking about the true Sahrawis, the genuine patriots who have remained committed to the bond of allegiance which has always existed between their forefathers and Moroccan monarchs.

As for the few people who are get carried away by the views of our enemies and who champion them, there is no place for them among us. However, the homeland is most forgiving and magnanimous towards those who come to their senses and repent.

Dear Citizens,

The implementation of the Development Model for the Southern Provinces shows how committed we are to fulfilling our obligations towards our fellow citizens in these provinces, which will thus become a model of integrated development.

We want this Development Model to seal these provinces' integration into the unified homeland and to enhance the influence of the Sahara region as an economic hub and a crucial link between Morocco and its African roots.

I have therefore decided to muster all the means available, by the grace of the Almighty, to implement a number of major projects as well as social, medical and educational programs in the regions of Laayoune-Sajia el-Hamra, Dakhla-Oued Eddahab and Guelmim-Oued Noon.

As regards infrastructure, the road network in the region will be enhanced, and a dual carriageway complying with international standards will be built to link Tiznit, Laayoun and Dakhla.

I also call on the Government to think about setting up hub airports in the Southern Provinces to serve African destinations.

One of my ambitions is to see a rail link between Tangier and Lagouira to connect Morocco with the rest of Africa. I pray that Almighty God assist us in securing the funds we need today to complete the Marrakech-Lagouira line.

We also intend to build the Great Dakhla Atlantic Port, implement major solar and wind energy projects in the south and connect Dakhla to the national electricity network.

One of our goals is to link these networks and infrastructure to African countries, thereby contributing to their development.

I realize, of course, that infrastructure, on its own, cannot improve the citizens' living conditions. I am therefore keen to press ahead with economic development and to support that process with human development projects.

I should like to stress, in this connection, that revenue from natural resources will continue to be invested in the region, for the benefit of the local populations and in consultation and coordination with them.

Several projects for the use and promotion of local resources and products will be implemented, such as the major seawater desalination plant in Dakhla and the establishment of industrial zones and facilities in Laayoun, El Marsa and Boujdour.

To support these initiatives, I am keen to make sure an investment-friendly legal framework is instituted, in which the conditions for clarity and competitiveness are met

for both national and foreign investors so they may contribute to development in the region.

An economic development fund will also be set up to expand the economic fabric, support businesses and the social economy, generate steady income and create jobs, particularly for young people.

Dear Citizens,

To me, what matters most is to make sure the dignity of our fellow citizens in the Sahara is safeguarded - particularly that of younger generations - and to strengthen their love for their country and their attachment to their homeland.

Accordingly, I have asked the Government to revisit the social welfare system to make it more transparent and equitable, in keeping with the principles of equality and social justice which most segments of the populations concerned have been calling for.

Furthermore, considering the special place the Hassani culture has in the hearts and minds of Saharan people, I am keen to strengthen the mechanisms needed for the preservation and promotion of the Saharan heritage, particularly by building theaters, museums and cultural centers in the southern part of the country.

As regards human rights, Morocco has, by the grace of the Almighty, managed to foil the schemes of our enemies through the nation's mobilization, good security governance and constructive interaction with civil society organizations.

Moreover, as an institution provided for in the Constitution, the National Human Rights Council and its Regional Committees, which are tasked with protecting rights and freedoms, are independently addressing whatever transgression there may be, through dialogue and cooperation with public authorities, civil society organizations and the citizens.

Dear Citizens,

The implementation of advanced regionalization bolsters Morocco's credibility and shows our country honors its commitments.

As I pointed out at the State Opening of Parliament, the legitimacy which was democratically conferred by the citizens upon the officials who were elected in the region makes them the true representatives of the inhabitants of the southern provinces vis-à-vis national institutions as well as the international community.

To make sure the Southern Provinces are front and center of the implementation of advanced regionalization, a series of program-contracts will be concluded between the central government and the regions to determine each party's obligations regarding the execution of development projects.

I therefore call on the Government to speed up the adoption of legislative texts on devolution and support that with the transfer of qualified human resources and funds, with a view to replicating that experience in the Kingdom's other regions.

We also have to speed up the preparation of a real charter for administrative devolution that gives regional departments and agencies the prerogatives needed to run the region's affairs at the local level.

I should like to insist, in this respect, on the need to ensure citizen participation through platforms and mechanisms for permanent dialogue and consultation so that the citizens may fully subscribe to programs and be involved in their implementation.

I therefore expect the inhabitants of our southern provinces and their representatives to live up to their responsibilities, now that we have set in place the institutional and development-related mechanisms for them to manage their affairs and cater for their needs.

Dear Citizens,

When Morocco promises something, it delivers in both word and deed. Our country makes no commitment it cannot honor.

Therefore, we wish to send out a message to the world: Unlike others, we, in Morocco, use no empty slogans nor do we sell illusions. When we commit to something, we honor our commitment, and we implement things on the ground.

- Morocco promised to implement advanced regionalization. Today, advanced regionalization is a reality on the ground, with its institutions and its prerogatives;
- Morocco promised democracy and pledged to enable the inhabitants of its southern provinces to run their local affairs. They have now chosen their representatives and are freely and responsibly involved in local institutions;
- Morocco also promised to come up with a specific development model for its southern provinces. Today, we have launched large-scale, defining projects that will generate wealth and create jobs;
- Morocco committed to guarantee peace and security. Today, the Moroccan Sahara is the safest area in the Sahel and Sahara region.

Today, Morocco pledges to make the Moroccan Sahara a hub for communication and exchange with sub-Saharan African countries and to build the infrastructure needed to that end. And once again, our country will honor its commitment, whether its enemies like it or not.

On the other hand, the people in Tindouf, in Algeria, continue to suffer from poverty, despair, deprivation and the systematic violation of their basic rights. So, I believe it is only fair to ask:

Where have the millions of dollars of humanitarian aid gone - more than 60 million Euros a year - not to mention the billions of Euros spent on armament for the separatists and on their propaganda and apparatus of repression?

How can one explain the fact that the separatists' leaders are obscenely rich and have real estate and bank accounts in Europe and Latin America?

Why has not Algeria done anything to improve the living conditions of the Tindouf camp population, which is 40,000 at the very most – i.e. the equivalent of the population of a medium-sized neighborhood in Algiers?

This means that for forty years Algeria could not - or did not want to - build 6,000 housing units to safeguard their dignity. That amounts to an average of 150 housing units a year.

Why does Algeria - which has spent billions on its military and diplomatic war against Morocco - let the Tindouf inhabitants live in such appalling, inhuman conditions?

History is going to judge those who have turned the free, respectable sons and daughters of the Sahara into beggars of humanitarian aid.

It will bear witness to the fact that they have exploited the tragedy of a group of Saharan women and children, turning them into war booty and using them not only for illegal commercial exploitation, but also as a tool for diplomatic dispute.

I ask the people in the Tindouf camps: Are you satisfied with the awful conditions you live in? Do women in the camps accept the sense of despair and frustration prevailing among their sons and daughters, who have no horizon or future to look forward to?

I personally believe you deserve better than these inhuman conditions. Should you put up with them, however, you would only have yourselves to blame. Meanwhile, you can see that Morocco is pressing ahead with the development of its southern provinces, making sure the inhabitants of those provinces enjoy a free, dignified life.

Dear citizens,

The Sahara question is not the first issue Morocco has faced in its history. It has known siba (lawlessness) and confusion; it lived under the protectorate regime and it endured occupation. It also experienced periods of strife and contention upon gaining independence as it set out to build a modern state.

Whenever it faces a difficult situation, Morocco invariably comes out strong and united, with its head held high. This is because Moroccans deeply believe in their common destiny, defend their immutable values and territorial integrity and are fully committed to the close bond and cohesion between the throne and the people.

By starting to implement advanced regionalization and adopting a development model, Morocco wishes to increase the chances of finding a lasting solution to the artificial dispute over our territorial integrity.

Because it believes its cause is a just one, it reacted positively in 2007 to the call of the international community and came up with proposals to find a way out of the impasse.

Therefore, we proposed the Autonomy Initiative for the Southern Provinces, which was judged by the international community to be both serious and credible.

As I pointed out last year in my address commemorating the anniversary of the Green March, the Initiative is the most Morocco can offer. Its implementation will hinge on achieving a final political settlement within the framework of the United Nations Organization.

Those who are waiting for any other concession on Morocco's part are deceiving themselves. Indeed, Morocco has given all there was to give. It has given of its sons' blood to defend the Sahara.

Do we have to make further concessions, like some international and non-governmental organizations want us to do?

We know the reasoning behind these hostile attitudes; their aim is to divide the country. But we also know that those concerned have no right to meddle in our affairs.

This is the same principle we uphold in dealing with certain parties inside international organizations that do not know Morocco's history and seek to come up with scenarios which are hatched in air-conditioned offices, are far removed from reality and are presented as proposals for the settlement of the regional dispute over the Moroccan Sahara.

Morocco rejects any foolish, adventurous course of action that could have serious consequences, as well as any useless, unworkable proposal whose only aim is to undermine the positive momentum created by the Autonomy Initiative.

Morocco will also confront hostile campaigns against Moroccan products, building on the same spirit of sacrifice and commitment demonstrated in the political and security sectors to defend its unity and immutable values. As for those who want to boycott our products, in blatant violation of international law, let them do so. However, they will have to assume the responsibilities for their decisions.

Morocco has the right to invite its partners - states as well as global companies - to benefit from the investment opportunities to be created in the region, thanks to the large-scale projects that will be launched.

Just as we make no distinction between the northern and the southern parts of Morocco, we see no difference between tomatoes from Agadir and those from Dakhla, sardines from Larache and those from Boujdour, phosphates from Khouribga and those from Boucraa - even though the latter represent less than 2% of our national reserves, as confirmed by universally recognized data.

With the same resolve and steadfastness, Morocco will also face up to all attempts that seek to cast doubts on the legal status of the Moroccan Sahara or question our country's right to exercise its powers and prerogatives fully on its land, in the southern provinces, just as it does in the northern part of the country.

This means we must all step up efforts and remain vigilant and fully mobilized to make our just cause better known, to shine a spotlight on the progress our country is making and to confront our enemies' schemes.

Dear Citizens,

It is our collective duty to promote development in our southern provinces, to safeguard the dignity of the sons and daughters of those provinces and to defend the country's territorial integrity, in keeping with the same spirit of commitment and sacrifice which characterized the Green March.

This would be the best token of loyalty to the architect of the Green March, my revered father His Late Majesty King Hassan II - may he rest in peace - and to the memory of the nation's glorious martyrs.

Wassalamu alaikum warahmatullah wabarakatuh.