



**HIS MAJESTY KING MOHAMMED VI
MAY GOD ASSIST HIM**



HM the King Sends Message to Participants in 1st National Conference on Advanced Regionalization

HM King Mohammed VI sent a message to the participants in the first National Conference on Advanced Regionalization, which kicked off Friday in Agadir.

Here follows the full text of the royal message, which was read out by minister of the interior, Abdelouafi Laftit.

"Praise be to God,

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

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I should like to commend you for convening this national conference to discuss the progress that has been made in the advanced regionalization process. I was keen to grant my patronage to this conference, given the special interest I have taken in this major structural project since I launched it. I hope this meeting will be a suitable opportunity for a thorough debate and an exchange of views on current and future challenges, and on how this project can contribute to achieving economic, social and cultural development in our country.

As you know, ever since Morocco became independent, decentralization has been an essential element in the management of state affairs as well as a strategic choice made to set up administrative and political institutions and consolidate democracy. At all key junctures in our country's history, special importance was attached to decentralization through the series of constitutional, political and administrative reforms introduced. This made it possible to implement far-reaching changes in the legislation underpinning decentralization, and to gradually entrench the essential role local governments are playing to promote development in the economic, political and social spheres.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Significant steps have been taken to implement advanced regionalization since I set up the Advisory Committee on Advanced Regionalization. The reports drawn up by that Committee have formed the basis for the Moroccan model - one that is built around the active contribution of local governments to integrated development based on democracy, efficiency and participation.

The 2011 Constitution has crowned a series of political experiences and economic and social achievements that have served as the cornerstone for building a modern, democratic society governed by the rule of law. The Constitution enshrines local governments - and regions in particular - as one of the nation's elected institutions. It also stipulates for the Kingdom's organizational setup to be a decentralized system based on advanced regionalization and sets out a number of basic principles regarding decentralized management that are consistent with international practice in this field.

However, the actual implementation of the fundamentals of advanced regionalization in our country hinges on the existence of a clear, feasible regional policy in the economic, social, cultural and environmental sectors. It should be part of a public policy based on the regional dimension and on an efficient and strong economy that

stimulates growth, creates job opportunities and achieves social justice. Moreover, it is important to increase the effectiveness of policies, programs and projects at the regional level to make sure they actually benefit target populations, in keeping with the principles of social and inter-regional justice, from which all our citizens should profit on an equal footing.

Consistent with the above strategy, I have sought, from the beginning, to make sure this approach is applied on the ground, starting with our recovered Saharan provinces. To that end, we have been implementing a comprehensive development model that takes into account the particularities of those provinces and that includes major projects designed to meet the expectations and aspirations of inhabitants in those regions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I have stressed on many occasions, serving the citizens and making sure their legitimate rights are respected is the very *raison d'être* of all types of public institutions and government agencies. Therefore, local governments, decentralized administrations and public institutions are called upon to mobilize their human, financial and logistical resources to provide fair and efficient public services throughout the Kingdom.

Whatever the progress in implementing advanced regionalization, it will still fall short of our expectations so long as it is not accompanied by a set of indispensable measures that make it possible for regions to exercise their powers fully and more effectively.

With that in mind, I have recently seen to it that our Government adopt the administrative devolution charter and seek to enforce it at the regional level. Indeed, I believe that administrative devolution is both a pillar and a pre-requisite for the success of advanced

regionalization.

Thus, the charter defines the role and functions of central and devolved administrations. It lays focus on the regional level as the appropriate framework for harmonizing public policies, programming government departments' various projects, delegating tasks, material means and human resources to devolved administrations, and developing contract-programs between central government and those administrations.

The above objectives cannot be achieved unless all energies are mobilized and all ministerial departments are actively involved in implementing the charter. To this end, it is important to speed up the preparation of master plans for administrative decentralization. They must be based on actual devolution to regions of function-related and decision-making powers.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am sure you realize that relying on public investment alone is not enough and that we need to increase resources by opening up to the private sector. It is important to take the necessary measures to inform private investors of investment opportunities at the regional level, particularly with regard to real estate, land use planning and development sectors that represent a priority for the region concerned.

Consequently, the reform of the system governing regional investment centers - which has given them greater competencies as well as significant powers in the management of investment at the regional level - will make them a particularly important tool that supports the regions' action to promote economic development and boost enterprises.

In parallel, special importance should be given to strengthening international decentralized cooperation - which supports advanced regionalization - and to creating new strategic partnerships that match the ambitions of the Moroccan diplomatic service with respect to Africa.

On a different level, as I pointed out - both in my address on the occasion of the State Opening of Parliament in 2017 and in my Message to the participants in the second Parliamentary Forum on Regions, held the same year - the powers vested in local governments and regional councils should be precisely defined to avoid confusion, overlapping and duplication of tasks. Moreover, these powers should be gradually scalable to match any increase in human and financial resources.

You will remember that I called for constructive consultation to determine regional prerogatives with the utmost precision, within the framework of the powers vested in regions by the relevant organic law. In the initial phase, regions will exercise these powers which will be regularly updated. In this regard, I urge government authorities, local and regional elected officials and all the stakeholders concerned to be more actively involved in the current consultation in order to come up with effective ways to enable regions to exercise their powers. This should be done in a participatory way and within a reasonable timeframe.

To firmly establish this approach, in my Message to the third Parliamentary Forum on Regions, I called on the participants to reflect on a methodological framework with a specific timeline for regions to exercise their powers. I pointed out the need for coherence between intrinsic, shared and devolved powers, keeping in mind the financial and managerial capabilities of each region.

I appreciate the efforts already made to enable the regions to exercise their prerogatives. Nevertheless, I wish to insist on the need to adopt a gradual, differentiated approach to the way regions exercise their

powers, keeping in mind the principle of subsidiarity enshrined in the Kingdom's Constitution regarding the distribution of powers, especially between the State, on the one hand, and regions and local authorities, on the other.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There have been four years of work on this since the 2015 regional and local elections, which gave us regional political elites.

This first regional mandate provided the building blocks needed to set this important project in motion. Thus, a number of initiatives and practical measures have been introduced, especially with regard to completing the legal and regulatory framework concerned. The aim has been to implement organic laws on local governments and help the latter achieve good governance in the management of their affairs and the exercise of their powers. Other measures have been taken, mostly in connection with the organization of regional administrations and the consolidation of mechanisms aimed at enhancing women's representation in regional councils.

The current term of office is truly the foundational stage. It paves the way for the actual implementation of the new vision concerning decentralized government. Because of their central position in this new setup, regions are key players in steering public policy, planning development programs and projects and defining strategies at various levels, particularly those relating to economic development, attracting investment and boosting enterprises. These are pillars in any integrated economic development plan.

The convening of this first National Conference and your choice of crucially important topics for discussion - especially the powers of regions, contract-programs, regional integrated development, regional management, financial governance, democracy and participation - are

fully in line with my concern to make sure all the measures needed to effectively implement this major reform project have been taken. Indeed, we expect regionalization to provide solutions and fulfil social and development expectations throughout the Kingdom. These solutions should give young people - who are our intangible asset and a dynamic force in society - mechanisms that facilitate their participation in the management of regional and local public affairs.

Today's meeting is also an important opportunity to discuss the experience of the past four years, to put into practice the three organizational laws on local governments, and to overcome the various challenges faced by regional elites with respect to implementing the powers of the regions. The aim is to pause and undertake a thorough assessment, which will be as much a starting point for a new phase as a continuation of the process to put this project into practice. This is an endeavor that should make it possible to overcome all the challenges faced up to now, and to consolidate the rules of good governance in the management of regional affairs, since the next stage will necessarily involve proceeding steadily to effectively and efficiently achieve this paradigm shift.

In the same vein, I wish to remind you of the importance of assisting local governments in the field of training and capacity building for elected officials and the staff, in all areas of competence, the aim being to enhance the performance of local and regional authorities in their current format.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I should like to insist on the importance of using contracting mechanisms between the regions, central government and the various other stakeholders concerned. Contracting mechanisms should be put into practice and leveraged for the implementation of priority development projects. All the Kingdom's regions have prepared development programs, using a participatory approach that will facilitate the smooth execution of projects. I wish to invite regions

to work on a mid-term assessment mechanism for better evaluation, both with regard to prioritizing projects and strengthening the financial engineering of planned projects. The goal is to ensure program efficiency on the one hand, and coherence between regional policies and programs, on the other.

To conclude, I hope this National Conference will be a special opportunity for careful reflection, fruitful research and serious dialogue to make an accurate assessment of the outcome of efforts to implement advanced regionalization. I also hope you will contribute practical recommendations that help us rise to the challenge of achieving regional development, curb social disparities, enhance attractiveness, improve regional competitiveness, open up to modern financial governance mechanisms, and ensure the effectiveness of all forms of participatory democracy, making it a lever for integrated, sustainable economic and social development.

I pray that Almighty God guide your steps and grant you every success.

Wassalamou alaikoum warahmatoullahi wabarakatouh."

MAP 20 December 2019