

# YOUSSEF AMRANI

Royal Cabinet, Morocco

**Thierry de MONTBRIAL, Founder and Chairman of the WPC**

Je vais maintenant passer la parole à Youssef pour connaître le point de vue du Maroc, qui est extrêmement important dans cette affaire.

**Youssef AMRANI, Royal Cabinet, Morocco**

First I would like to react to your question about Vienna. I think you are right. The meeting of the P5 countries plus the regional players regarding Syria could not reach an agreement in Vienna. There was an agreement that was reached on a number of issues with regard to maintaining Syria's territorial unity and with regard to the future of Syria as a democratic state in which ethnic and religious groups would coexist. There was also a commitment expressed by the participants on how we should provide humanitarian assistance to Syria in the future and to work for a future Syria. However, there was no agreement as far as the timing of the future of Bashar al-Assad. This is only to respond to your question about Vienna, but I think there will be new meetings, and the crucial issue is the withdrawal of the foreign fighters in Syria.

I would like to ask two questions, if you will allow me, and the first one will be very brief. Where is the region today? Everybody knows that the region is collapsing. When I talk about the region, I mean the Middle East plus the Maghreb and beyond to Africa, especially the Sahel, because all the issues are connected, and the region includes North Africa. Today it is collapsing, and there are a lot of challenges in Syria, with over 300,000 casualties and 10 million refugees. It is a country that was divided in three parts, one of which is run by ISIS and the others by the Sunni and Kurdish opposition and by the state.

Iraq is also a complicated issue; again the extremists are taking the lead, and despite the reform efforts of the government, there are still a lot of divisions. We should not forget Libya, which is also a very complicated issue. Unfortunately, Bernardino Leon is not here, and Morocco has been working with him for the last month in order to bring all the different Libyan factions together to work for a constitutional setup and the formation of a new government. It was difficult, and after months we were able to reach a compromise on the government, but it is complicated and difficult. How can you implement democracy in a country where there are two parliaments, two governments, no civil society and no political parties? This shows the difficulties in the region.

I agree completely with Elisabeth that only a political solution, inclusive dialogue and democratic institutions can help us to move forward in these negotiations. I want to ask another question in this connection that was asked this morning by an American journalist. We have to be very careful. People are thinking in terms of creating new entities in the region to try to solve the issues, such as three states in Syria or three states in Iraq. This is in the minds of some people who think about the future of the region.

We as Moroccans think that respecting the independence, the unity and the territorial integrity of states is essential. We cannot create more states, because more states means more vacuums, more ISIS, and more movement. Therefore, we cannot afford more weak and fragile states in our region, which is why it is important to counter this Daesh movement.

I will not forget about the Middle East peace process, which is essential here. We cannot have peace and stability in the region if we do not work to put the Israel-Palestine peace process back on track, because if we do not do it today, we might create a vacuum in the future, and maybe in the future we will see another ISIS coming to the region. The latest developments in Jerusalem, the deepening of the Israeli occupation and the growing internationalization of the conflict demonstrated the inability to resolve the conflict or to manage it. It is of the utmost importance that the entire



international community becomes more seriously involved in achieving this objective. The major powers (the EU, U.S, Russia) should put all their efforts to achieving the necessary two-State solution.

Without forgetting the Sahel region which faces a deterioration of the political, security, humanitarian and human rights situation, exacerbated by the many challenges linked to the porosity of borders, cross border organized crime, as well as the proliferation of threats connected to terrorist groups in the Sahel-Saharan strip, threatening the stability of all states in the region.

The Sahel is a great security concern, not only for the Maghreb countries but also for Europe. We have seen that everything is interconnected, and the security of the Maghreb is the security of the Sahel and of Europe, because al-Qaida, Boko Haram and other organisations are trying to operate there. There is a lesson from all this geopolitical mess, which is that no state or multilateral actor alone has the power to manage or to solve the crisis. We need to assume our shared responsibility if we want to solve this issue.

Where is our region moving today, and how can we work in this context? This is my second question. We need something new for our region, and I am sorry to say, Elisabeth, that yesterday Mrs Mogherini issued a new Neighbourhood Policy for the EU, and it is that same tool, not big ambitions, that will enable us to move forward with efforts in the region.

All of us, France, Morocco and other countries, were trying to insist on Europe having an ambition for its neighbours, having a new vision, new tools. We are therefore facing new facts on the ground, new urgent issues that require a rallying project that may help foster peace and stability in the southern Mediterranean and create a space for shared prosperity.

We should not only blame others but also do our own homework internally. We should up democratic states, and also build up coherent regional integration, as in the Maghreb, for example. The Maghreb is not working, and it could be an opportunity not only to face the security challenges but also to create wealth, because in the end what is important for our young generation is the creation of jobs, to promote growth, and it is our own responsibility to do this.

Therefore, we need to work on three dimensions. We need to work in the political sphere by ensuring the stability of all countries and building up democratic countries based on good governance.

Secondly, in security matters, it is interesting and important that we have cooperation in the field of security and the exchange of intelligence, by implementing effective, multifaceted security cooperation to stem the threat of terrorism and extremism. Our approach should be based on a realistic, comprehensive and consistent strategy that would deconstruct the jihadi hate speech and violence-prone discourse. Thanks to this exchange of information and intelligence, we will be able to defeat Daesh.

The third dimension is economic development. It is essential to create wealth and perspectives for shared prosperity. The opportunities in our region have to do with the economic development and investment and the building up of coherent regional groupings. By making sure we have the means to position ourselves on the global economic arena.

Finally, I would like to speak not about my country but to share with you some ideas that we are considering in Morocco. Morocco has been able to move forward thanks to three elements: vision, leadership and instruments or approach. First the vision is to consolidate our democratic process. We have achieved a lot, of course, it is a long process, and we have made this choice since independence. Regarding leadership, we had King Mohammed VI, who was a driving force to move the country ahead and build up a democratic country. The third one is the approach. We had to work with all the political parties, with our civil society, and we have learned through this experience to compromise and to listen to the other. This was a general experience that enabled us to build up something consistent, and I think today we have a clear vision for the future.

Let me finish by tackling one of the most important issues today. Besides the economic and political development, today the priority should be to deconstruct the jihadi narrative. We need coherent and sustained counter-messaging, strategic communication to be able to do this, because the jihadists use the Internet, they use communication, they use the media, and we need to deconstruct the ideology of the jihadist and the threat they pose, not only to our region but



to the whole world. We need the voices to do that, we need the leadership, and we need the people who understand Islam.

Morocco is trying to do its best. Building on the strength of its ancestral links to many African countries where Islam was often historically introduced by Morocco, as well as the legitimacy derived from our Sovereign's status of Commander of the Faithful and the credible results obtained from a successful reform of the religious field, the Kingdom of Morocco is well equipped to help preserve and promote a moderate, tolerant and open expression of Sunni Islam, such as it has always existed within our region.

To this end, Morocco, under the leadership of His Majesty the King Mohammed VI, is undertaking religious training programs currently benefitting hundred imams from Africa, to help provide them with an education that is fully respectful of the traditional moderate precepts shared by all countries adhering to the Malekite Rite.

As well Morocco and France are working together in the training of imams, because radicalisation today is not only a question of Muslims in Muslim countries. How many Muslims are in France today? There is Islam de France it is important and France today is doing its best to integrate this population. We need the tools to undermine this radicalisation, this extremist philosophy. This should be done through countering the Daesh narrative, through facilitating counter-messaging through leaders. In this connection, we need to join our efforts.

One country alone cannot do it. We need to coordinate a strategy of communication to isolate Daesh and maybe we can propose a platform to work on this issue. We can work to bring everyone together to devise something that can help us to coordinate in fighting these extremists. We need to solve the ongoing conflicts, of course, but this is another issue.