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Your Excellency,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear friends,

Andy Warhol established the right to "15 minutes of fame".

Before him, etiquette allowed the "quarter hour of courtesy".

So if my arithmetic is right, I have 30 minutes of speaking time in front of me.

Rest assured. I promise to use up only half, to let you enjoy this dinner—which looks as though it's going to be quite delicious.

But first, I would like to pay tribute to somebody who deserves it, Thierry de Montbrial. We would not all be here tonight without him.

Dear Thierry, thank you!

Thank you for your tireless but, as you can see, heartily acknowledged efforts.

Thank you for your vision.

Today those who had faith in this adventure in 2008, who believed the WPC would continue through the years with brilliance and distinction, are delighted. And the best is yet to come.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to discuss and debate the world's key issues.

Your Excellency,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear friends,

It is a great honour and a genuine pleasure for me to speak to you at the gala dinner of the 10th World Policy Conference, which is held under the High Patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, may God help him.

This year's World Policy Conference takes place in a special context for Morocco and the world.

For the world, trends are firming up. Swift, deep and often destabilising changes—the exact opposite of linear changes, in any case—are taking place.

- Certitudes are crumbling. Until this year, we thought Lucy was our ancestor. It turns out a compatriot of ours is the world's oldest human.
- Geopolitics has a new face. The United Kingdom left the EU, the Kingdom of Morocco joined the AU.



- Some doors are opening up while others remain tightly and desperately shut: the Arab Maghreb Union and the unfortunate closing of Algeria's borders.

Under the sovereign's impetus, Morocco has not stood idly by watching these changes. Under the impetus of HM the King, 2017 was a diplomatic year for Your Excellency.

In recent years, Morocco has strengthened its place in the world.

In particular, it has:

- Shifted the focus of its international policy back to Africa;
- Brought coherence to its foreign political, economic and cultural action;
- Diversified its partnerships (EU, US, China, Russia, CCG);
- Increased its range of action (all the sub-regions of Africa; diversification of partnerships);
- Bolstered its geostrategic position (West African, pan-African, Atlantic, Arab and Mediterranean Morocco).

This is Morocco today:

- A dynamic Morocco;
- A Morocco that inspires collective success;
- A Morocco that breaks new ground;
- A Morocco driven by the personal impetus of a visionary, pro-active King emphasizing action and diplomacy in words and deeds.

Your Excellency,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear friends,

Our world is uncertain. That is not news to you!

There is no denying that today's world is in the throes of upheaval.

Multiple, shape-shifting paradoxes are fuelling challenges.

I will mention just four that matter particularly to Morocco because of their impact on our action and deployment.

Paradox no. 1

Information, which has never circulated so freely in the world, produces not just knowledge, but also ignorance.

New information and communication technologies (NTIC) are growing at an unprecedented pace. They embody and transmit knowledge, but also spread chaos. Terrorist and criminal organisations use them to undermine security, stability and development efforts.

Instead of shaping their critical thinking, easy, approximate and incomplete information ("fake news" as some would say), is believed by ignorant people with oversized egos.

No wonder the darkest-minded jihadis recruit new members from the most connected age bracket, young people between the ages of 20 and 30.



If there is one bet the world must make, it is on knowledge instead of information.

Paradox no. 2

Conflicts are fewer but more complex.

The number of conflicts has decreased by nearly 40% since the 1990s.

However, that figure hides a bitter reality: conflicts are harder to settle, and therefore longer, deadlier and more devastating for the most vulnerable civilian populations.

They are also taking new, asymmetrical, less conventional but more violent forms, such as terrorism, violent extremism, separatism and climate change.

Those new threats have never loomed so large and dangerous. They affect all our societies and our collective security. They require thinking about the nature of the response, which in turn necessitates a growing effort and commitment.

Paradox no. 3

The world is said to be a "planetary village" yet more and more barriers are rising.

Connectivity cancels out distances and the growth of transport snubs geography.

But as some gaps narrow, others widen.

Ethnocentrism is on the rise. It transcends the State in favour of the nation, then the fief, today the region, tomorrow the ethnic group and the clan.

Separatism is the new face of conflictual ostracism. The opposite of rational construction, it is by definition a nihilistic enterprise of tearing down that believes in nothing, if only itself.

Paradox no. 4

The system dating from the Second World War is criticised, but no alternative has been found.

Asking questions about alternatives is as legitimate as ruthlessly attacking the existing order is counter-productive. Multilateralism remains vital for Morocco. But its facets are changing. Morocco is aware of that.

There is what was known as advanced multilateralism, the G8 (now the G7 again), G20, G15, G9 and G5 in the Sahel, which cobble together useful coalitions to react to major challenges.

But new forms of multilateralism are emerging today: "cherry picking" multilateralism with a single pivot around which projects revolve and governments rally.

The most interesting example is China's Silk Road initiative, which aims to boost trade and connectivity between several parts of the world.

Morocco's location makes it a sort of useful window on that world:

- A window to the North looking out onto Europe, with its geopolitical hesitations, its introspection and, sometimes, its autism with regard to its neighbours;
- A window on the Arab world and its upheavals;
- A window on Africa and its virtuous but laborious transitions;
- A window on the Atlantic and its untapped potential.



In this context, under the vision of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, may God help him, Morocco cannot afford to stand idly by in a world that is on the move and changing with amazing speed.

In the new world order taking shape, Morocco promotes the clear, lucid vision of His Majesty the King concerning the Kingdom's role on the international chessboard.

Morocco has causes to uphold, interests to promote and unique assets to offer.

Morocco does not consider itself a "power" (sub-regional, regional or international) but a "hub" of diplomacy, action and ideas for building an imaginative new paradigm.

That is why gatherings such as ours, where debate is open and thinking about the future allowed, are highly appreciated in our country.

Buoyed by its political stability, Morocco promotes peace and security in its regional and international environment.

Morocco's foreign policy, an extension of its domestic strategic choices, is active and solid.

At a time and in a world of withdrawal, exclusion and barriers, the Kingdom promotes tolerance and living together.

It is and will remain a space of freedom and cultural cross-fertilisation and meetings between civilisations.

Morocco is very optimistic about the emergence of the new Africa.

True, Africa is still one of the world's most war-torn regions. It has paid a heavy price.

The total estimated cost of wars in Africa between 1990 and 2017 is put at nearly \$400 billion—the same amount as all the development aid it received during the same period.

Nevertheless, for Morocco Africa remains the continent of hope and the future.

Africa is 30 million km² of opportunities. It is 1.2 billion people, or 16% of the world's population on 20% of its landmass.

Thanks to the vision of His Majesty the King, may God help him, today Africa is the main priority of the Kingdom's foreign policy.

Morocco's African vocation has never wavered throughout its long, rich history.

Today it is taking on a new, bigger and more important dimension. It is growing thanks to increasingly strong and close historic, spiritual and social ties.

Morocco's new African policy has four pillars.

The first is a conviction: for Morocco, Africa is not a matter of resources but of will and conviction. Morocco sees Africa as its home, its backyard and its roots.

The second is knowledge of the terrain. For Morocco, Africa is not a discovery or a trend. Morocco's King has visited over 30 countries in Africa.

Third, Morocco has something unique to offer. Some countries have more technology than Morocco. Others have more resources. But Morocco offers an incomparable combination of religion, civilisation, culture, security, the human, the military and the economic.



The fourth is a new view of Africa, an ambitious Africa with projects showing it is entering a new phase, projects on another threshold, another level, such as the Atlantic gas pipeline or food security projects. In a speech on 20 August 2016, His Majesty King Mohammed VI stressed the strength of the organic link between Morocco and its continent:

“Africa is not an aim for us, but rather a vocation at the service of Africans, wherever they are. We are convinced that Morocco’s interests are also Africa’s, and that its future cannot be imagined without it. We believe that progress and stability for some must mean progress and stability for all.”

Putting Africa at the heart of strategic choices is an eminent act of leadership.

Morocco’s African policy is a carefully considered choice.

This is a special year for Morocco. Under the impetus of His Majesty the King, our country has devoted much energy to Africa. The year was capped by our return to the AU and will continue with its upcoming membership in ECOWAS.

In 2017, Morocco chaired three important bodies. The Kingdom is the outgoing president of COP22, where it put Africa at the heart of the climate change problem.

Morocco is co-president of the Global Counterterrorism Forum.

Morocco is also co-president of the Global Forum on Migration and Development. It considers migration not a threat to build walls against, but as an opportunity to be seized on both sides, north and south.

Conclusion

Africa is a priority for Morocco, but not the only priority for its foreign policy.

Morocco is and will remain deeply involved in the Arab world, especially the Gulf countries.

Morocco is and will remain a Mediterranean country involved in the various fora of dialogue on security, cooperation, co-development and a new concept of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, where it is ready to play a leading role, breaking the mould and pushing Europe towards a bolder, more generous view of its southern neighbours.

Morocco is and will remain a loyal, reliable partner in its traditional partnerships (France, Spain, the United States and the EU) as well as its new or strengthened ones (Russia, China, India and Latin America).

That is how Morocco sees the world: in terms of challenges, opportunities, actions and commitment.

Thank you for your attention.

Enjoy your meal!