

ASSIA BENSALAH ALAOUI

Ambassador-at-large of HM the King of Morocco

Jim HOAGLAND

To save time, I am going to get straight to our distinguished list of speakers, you have their biographies, and so I will let you look that up. We are going to start with Madam Assia Bensalah Alaoui, who is well known in Morocco and is the Ambassador-at-Large for the King of Morocco.

Assia BENSALAH-ALAOUI

Excellence, ladies and gentlemen, good evening. Thank you Thierry, even if you are not here, for giving me the daunting privilege of keeping this prestigious audience awake after three days of intense discussions. We can from the very start ask the question which our title calls forth: what global governance should we seek given the turning points to come and the current meek rebuilding on the international scene?

We ask this first considering Mr Trump's determination to deconstruct the federal state and unravel trade agreements, and considering his brazen excesses. Beyond the questions and, perhaps, the discredit cast on American leadership as a result of this, there are obvious risks caused by protectionism, with the major losses listed here yesterday, both for the Americans and for their partners, starting with their Canadian neighbours, but especially Mexico and Korea;

- The question also springs forth when one looks at China, which has taken aim at the very centre of the international chessboard, bolstered by the growing share of its investments on the global stage;
- to Russia as well, with its considerable capacity to harm;
- and to the uncertainties of old Europe, exacerbated by the rise of all kind of extremism, populism and the frustrations around Brexit, ... but which has also been fortunate enough to find, in the strength of the young President Macron, a determination to dispel these uncertainties, of course thanks to the leadership of Angela Merkel, all-enduring even when weakened.

Of course, the following question can be raised: is it possible to revitalise Europe, without rebuilding the Mediterranean region? A region where we share, of course, the failure of the Euro-Mediterranean project far more than the stability and security that had been announced.

It is imperative that we take aim at the root causes of this evil, particularly the factors that induce organised crime and its powerful transnational networks. I will be brief on this. We know that they are responsible for the complex links found in all forms of trafficking, from drug trafficking to arms trafficking and migrant smuggling. Unfortunately, this evil extends to children, who have to face prostitution and unpaid labour. We know that the translation of the Middle East to the Mediterranean, of terrorist groups affiliated both with Al-Qaeda and Daesh, which have built bonds with local terrorist groups across North Africa, particularly in Libya, and across the Sahelian zone, from Shebabs to Boko Haram, is threatening an extremely fragile region. We should therefore hope that the Europe-Africa conference will take aim at these problems, especially the sources of ill-development and youth unemployment, which unfortunately reduce the choice to taking up arms with terrorists and in mafia networks, or emigrating!

Yes, I did note President Macron's determination to dedicate 0.55% of France's GDP to development aid, but it is clear that with this figure, which takes us back to the early 1970s, when the 0.7% of GDP goal was reached only by the Scandinavians, we are wide of the mark. We therefore need vigorous responses to prevent these players from taking root and the failed states and narco-states from multiplying, unfortunately, into the first state in Africa. We are thus ready and waiting to see what this strategic partnership can do. I hope that the summit in Abidjan will not be too much of a disappointment.

In this regard, I am delighted to see that my country has taken this security issue to heart by developing a full-fledged global strategy, lauded by all our partners. It is clear that if you do not give people the chance to take up real issues in

their societies, you do not provide the sustainable foundation for security. That is what we are trying to do in Morocco, thanks to the ambitious democratisation programme, but the road is, unfortunately, long and often very winding.

What governance should we build in the face of these megatrends? The two megatrends to which everyone points today, namely the unstoppable rise of uncertainties –the only certainty we have – and the dizzying speed of technological change – we talked about it yesterday – with some benefits for the most powerful, the best performing, but also immeasurable risks for most people and, especially, for the most vulnerable. How can we parry these situations? There are not many options. Of course, there is universal income. We know where that got Mr. Benoît Hamon. There is also education, which is fundamental. But what education should we provide, knowing that the children who enter school today are going to have jobs that do not yet exist? What content should they be given? How can we prepare these children? How can we recycle the one-half of the adult population that is digitally illiterate, to avoid creating what Marc Benioff called “*digital refugees*”? I.e. those who choose exile, because they do not have the digital capacity to hold today's new jobs, and who will further weigh down the nightmarish existences of the current refugees and potential climate refugees.

It seems that, faced with the inevitable and irresistible rise of these phenomena, we are not without options, whether in Africa, in the Middle East or in the Arab-Islamic countries.

First of all, we share this cultural predisposition to cope, to “get by somehow”.

Secondly, the extreme youth of these populations is a definite asset: youth that is eager to put an end to anachronisms, provided, of course, that it can benefit from quality education and real inclusion in societies to give free rein to its ingenious solutions, its creative and innovative energies. In this respect, many examples were given yesterday regarding Africa.

I would also like to discuss all the changes that are taking place at the moment.

This morning, we once again had confirmation with this stunning news from Saudi Arabia, where the gerontocracy has passed the flame on to the crown prince. By throwing massive investments left and right, totalling \$500 billion for his “Future Investment Initiative”, with renewable energy, water, *smart cities*, artificial intelligence, entertainment; nothing has been left to chance, Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud wants to spark a real revolution. .

He is also calling for ambitious reforms, including societal reforms, particularly pertaining to women. I will say a few words in conclusion...

Above all, he advocates a return to an Islam of the middle ground, in an unprecedented break with the religious obduracy that once characterised this ultra-conservative state.

What are MBS' chances of succeeding? In particular, what are the risks, including what we heard this morning: eleven princes in prison, four ministers-in-office, ten former ministers, etc.? Will this not create greater instability? In any case, he is taking the risk, and this is a change that is absolutely fundamental, with uncertain results.

To conclude, last but not least, a word about women. You will see that, in this area, the results are unfortunately disappointing. Women are moreover the most noteworthy absentees from the agenda of this World Policy Conference, even if their presence is increasing. This turning point has mixed implications for women:

- With first of all bad news. We know how much the Weinstein scandal has revealed what everyone knew, but we tend to turn our attention away from the extreme vulnerability of women, even among the richest and most powerful. We will have to wait until 2234 for parity to be reached, according to a recent report!

- Some good news, despite it all. First, in Saudi Arabia, as I said. This is a real step forward, with women's empowerment through driving – symbolic – but, above all, through the removal of guardianship. However, everyone will have realised that on the way toward implementing this ambitious programme, the pitfalls are immense, as this is a tribal society where it is going to be extremely difficult to go into the “practicalities”, as they say, since even the most courageous will not dare to denounce their own tribes and their own clans.



Some definite progress, however.

With the Weinstein scandal, women now feel they can speak up. However, it is important that verbal inflation does not come to discredit women through excesses and provocations. We must reassure men, so that genuine partnerships can help us build better societies.

To conclude on a lighter note, this freedom to speak up has not spared Morocco. We have seen our junior ministers, those we call the secretaries of state, rebelling against the ministers under whom they work, often from the same party, because they felt discriminated against. The latter did not give them the means to properly perform their missions ordered by His Majesty the King. It was funny. But above all, it is symbolic, because women in Morocco now have real stakes to defend, a real step forward to safeguard.

In Morocco, we have succeeded in bringing about a true cultural revolution, which unfortunately remains to be implemented, thanks to the meeting of two legitimacies: the bottom-up approach, the work of women on the ground, has broken taboos, as of the 1992's, and the top-down approach thanks to the determined leadership of HRH the King, who set the emancipation of Moroccan women as one of the priorities of his reign, as he declared in his first speech on the throne. There are many examples of this: from women's advocacy in Morocco, the creation of the first association for the fight against AIDS by Mrs Hakima Himmish, professor of infectiology, to the collective of women lawyers who defend raped women, and on to the well-known association founded by Mrs Ech-Chenna, who houses single mothers with their children and who has inspired many to do the same. We are seeing an absolutely extraordinary increase in women's advocacy, which may well put an end to the extreme polarisation of our societies, where the controversies are played up and real debate avoided, including the debate on sexual misery in Muslim countries, where it is forbidden to have intercourse out of wedlock. We need to take up the real issues and bring fodder to the real debates.

To conclude on a happy note, I would like to congratulate Asma Lamrabet, because the activism of women on the ground is also supported by research and we have this remarkable woman, who runs the Centre on women in the association of Muslim scholars, Rabita Al Mohammadia. That centre had already won the prize for the best research on women in the Muslim world in 2014. Her work *Islam and women* has just been commended by the Atlas Prize, awarded by the French Embassy in Morocco. I definitely recommend the book to anyone wishing to better understand the complexities of the Middle East that appears so simple.

Thank you for your attention.

Jim HOAGLAND

Thank you very much Ambassador Alaoui for your concision and for connecting what we are talking about here to the outside world in so many different aspects and offering, at the end, some hope and some positive developments.