

Address by:

Mrs Yasmina Baddou

**Secretary of State in charge
Of Family, Childhood and Disabled Persons,**

**At the:
High Level Plenary Meeting**

**49th Session of the Commission on the Status of
Women**

**Review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and
Programme of Action and the Outcome Documents of the Special
Session of the General Assembly and current challenges and
forward looking strategies for the advancement and empowerment
of women and girls**

Madam Chairperson,
Ladies and Gentlemen the Heads of delegations,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an a honour for me to take part, on behalf of the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco, in the proceedings of the 49th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women geared towards evaluating the achievements made in the endeavour to improve the situation of women, ten years after the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Programme of Action, which has constituted a historic watershed in view of the decisions it adopted and which became a reference for Governments and international organisations involved in the area of development, in formulating and guiding their programmes and policies towards fighting against gender inequalities and promoting and protecting the rights of women .

On behalf of the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco I wish to warmly congratulate Madam Chairperson for the trust placed in her in chairing the important and historic proceedings of this session and I wish her and the other members of the Bureau all success in the task entrusted in them.

Madam Chairperson,

The Kingdom of Morocco whose constitution provides for the respect of human rights as internationally defined and acknowledged has made the issue of the improvement of the status of women one of its strategic objectives, convinced that achieving equality between men and women in rights and obligations is a prerequisite for laying the foundations of good governance and the rule of law.

Since the Beijing Conference, the Government has taken the initiative of co-operating with all the components of the civil society, including and most of all women's associations and with United Nations Institutions and Agencies. This initiative has taken the shape of a Plan of Action devised to further entrench the principle of equality between men and women and fight all forms of gender-based discrimination. During the **Decade 1995-2005**, Morocco has provided an environment conducive to the improvement of the situation of women. This decade was further marked by the strong political will expressed by His Majesty King Mohammed VI who placed the issue of guaranteeing justice for Moroccan women and removing all forms of discrimination and prejudice against her among the fundamental and pivotal issues in his Majesty's quest to build democratic and modern Morocco.

Here, I wish to express my pride and happiness that this assessment session is taking place at a time when Morocco is witnessing major changes at the social, economic and political levels. Indeed, the Government has formulated a development strategy aimed at bringing about a general context conducive to encouraging and

rule of law and the protection of human rights. This was carried out with due respect for the Kingdom's national references and international commitments, and with a special emphasis on promoting the rights of women, children and other vulnerable social groups.

Madam Chairperson,

Thanks to the special interest taken by His Majesty King Mohammed VI in the issue of improving women's conditions, a number of reforms have been adopted and initiated with the aim of edifying a democratic and modern society based on the rule of law and where the woman enjoys her full political, economic and social rights. This will be achieved by ensuring that all the preconditions necessary for women's empowerment and advancement and the protection of their rights are provided so that they can participate in and benefit from the development achievements on an equal footing with men.

To give an operational dimension to this reform drive, a number of our national legislative texts have been revised to meet the legitimate aspirations of the men and women of Morocco and to make them compatible and consistent with the international agreements and conventions ratified by our country. These reforms were carried out within the framework of a broad nationwide debate in which took part all the segments of the society, in full respect of our civilizational values and of the provisions of the Kingdom's constitution. This has made it possible to ensure national mobilisation and consensus around these reforms at the time of their formulation and implementation.

In this regard, a new family code was adopted and came into force in February 2004. Revisions were also introduced to the labour code, the criminal law and the penal code, as well as the civil code and to the law regarding abandoned children. All these adopted or reformed laws recognised the principle of equality between men and women in rights and obligations and ensured the abolition of all forms of gender-based discrimination.

The most important achievement remains the Family Code or Mudawwana, of which the provisions truly enshrine the principles and pillars of a modern democratic society built on the core values of justice and equal opportunity.

The new Family Code guaranteed and entrenched the principle of equality between men and women in all matters related to family responsibilities and set the legal age for marriage for male and female at eighteen. Divorce has become an equal right of the husband and the wife alike; and was placed under the oversight of the magistrates. Polygamy has become bound by a number of legal conditions that make it practically impossible, and the woman was dispensed from the need to have a guardian's authorisation at marriage. The new Code has also **guaranteed** the principle of equity and justice through the protection of the rights of women and children after divorce, and the creation of family courts.

In order to set the implementation of the new code in motion, our country has developed a number of mechanisms to guarantee the application of its provisions and an optimal implementation of its diverse provisions and objectives, along with the launching of nationwide awareness raising campaigns through the media to inform the citizens about its contents. It is my pleasure to inform you also that Morocco is in the process of lifting many of its reservations on some articles of the CEDAW. A Ministerial Commission under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister is now considering the procedures to this end.

Madam Chairperson,

In order to ensure follow-up to the implementation of the Government's strategy aimed at entrenching the values of equality and equal opportunity between men and women as an immutable option, a ministerial commission for women and development was created under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister. The commission acts as a mechanism of co-ordination between all government departments and agencies involved in the advancement of women.

In this respect, the Government has adopted a gender approach in the national programmes and policies, particularly in such critical fields as education and health, and in statistical bulletins, desirous of integrating this approach when compiling the country's annual budget.

The government sector in charge of women's issues, represented by the Secretariat of State in charge of Family, has also developed a number of programmes and created mechanisms entrusted with the task of sensitising decision makers about the importance of taking into consideration the real and strategic needs of women in all the national and regional development plans, formulated and implemented in partnership and in close co-operation with various government bodies, relevant stakeholders, national women's associations and UN Funds and Programmes. Some of these actions are as follows:

- The creation of the Moroccan Centre for Studies, Documentation and Research on Women which has been tasked with the compilation, updating and dissemination of all relevant information that may assist policy makers in the advancement of women.
- The institutionalization of gender and development focal points which are entrusted with the task of integrating a gender approach into the sectoral and regional development programmes and plans.
- The launching of the implementation of the national strategy for the elimination of all forms of violence against women by establishing an implementation plan for this strategy.
- The initiation of the creation of specialised regional centres for the co-ordination of regional efforts geared towards improving the economic and social conditions of women.
- The elaboration of a Plan of Action for improving the image of women in the various media and communication channels.

Madam Chairperson,

On the **economic, social** and political levels, and in **co-operation** with civil **society** and political parties, the Government has adopted a number of programmes aiming, inter alia, at:

- Improving health services in general and reproductive health in particular, and enforcing a system of compulsory medical coverage;
- Integrating women within the economy of the country by promoting women-led enterprise and encouraging the participation of women in decision-making within economic institutions;
- Encouraging women co-operatives and income-generating activities to eliminate women's marginalization;
- Adopting a quota system for elections. This has made it possible to increase the representation of women within Morocco's democratic institutions and allowed 35 women to become members of Parliament during the recent parliamentary elections. It has also encouraged women to join political parties most of which have instituted a quota system for women within their organs, and boosted the numbers of women in key positions within political parties;
- Formulating a number of national programmes geared towards equality in education and the training of women in fields that remain monopolised by men;
- Organising wide media and awareness raising campaigns targeting all economic, social and political actors about the importance of involving women at all levels.

Madam Chairperson,

As I reiterate the strong commitment of my country through these plans and programmes to the international efforts to accomplish what we all pledged during the Beijing Summit and to reach the Millennium Development Goals in order to achieve sustainable human development, I wish to avail myself of this opportunity to express my special greetings to all women who are struggling for their dignity and that of their countries all over the world. My greetings and appreciation also go to all men and women throughout the globe for the efforts they have relentlessly exerted over the last decade to spread the values of peace, equality and justice.

Thank you for your attention