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**THIRD INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF COLONIALISM**

**Caribbean regional seminar on the implementation of the Third International  
Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism: accelerating decolonization  
through renewed commitment and pragmatic measures**

**Saint George's, Grenada**

**2 to 4 May 2019**

**STATEMENT BY**

**MHAMED ABBA**

**(WESTERN SAHARA)**

Madame Chair,

Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to thank Mme Chair and the Bureau of the Committee of 24 for inviting me from the sahara region to participate for the second time in this year's seminar.

I am an elected Saharaoui native of the region of Laayoune-Sakia El Hamra which is composed of the cities: Laayoune, Boujdour, Esmara and Tarfaya.

Our council of region of Laayoune Sakia El Hamra was elected democratically by local Saharaoui population during the municipal and regional elections that took place in all the regions of Morocco, including the Sahara region, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of september 2015.

The Regional Council comprises 39 elected sahraouis, among them: 44% youth and 33% women. The bureau is composed by a President and 6 vice-Presidents.

I am one of the 6 vice-Presidents along with three women vice-Presidents, as far as parity is concerned.

The voter turnout in the elections which took place in the two regions of the Moroccan Sahara namely, Laayoune Sakia El Hamra and Dakhla Ouad Dahab, reached the highest rate of 79%. Those elections were held under the supervision of 4000 national and international observers.

Madame Chair,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The sahraouis of the two regions: Laayoune Sakia El Hamra and Dakhla Ouad Dahab, manage their own domestic affairs and own budget,

accounted for 8 billion US Dollars and established for the period between 2016 and 2021.

As you know, the Presidents of the two regions of the Moroccan Sahara took part in the two Geneva round-tables, representing Saharaoui population.

We firmly defend that the only option to resolve the dispute over the Sahara is the 2007 Autonomy Plan submitted by Morocco to the United Nations, which is a political, realistic, pragmatic, enduring solution based on compromise, in conformity with op2 of resolution 2468, adopted by the security council on April 30, 2019.

The Moroccan Autonomy Plan will definitely allow us to continue to run our local and political affairs and to actively contribute to the ongoing social empowerment and economic development in the Sahara region.

We strongly believe that any solution to end this regional conflict in the Moroccan Sahara must only be achieved with the total respect of the territorial integrity and sovereignty all over the Kingdom of Morocco.

Madame Chair,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The two regions of the Sahara enjoy their full right to development as stipulated in International law. The achievements made in the Sahara region are part of the Southern Provinces Development Program launched by His Majesty King Mohammed VI for the period 2015- 2021. This new proactive program pays particular attention to the participation of local populations in addressing one of the fundamental issues, namely the right to live in prosperity and social development.

It consists of more than 700 projects with a total budget of \$ 8 billion.

This new development model is articulated around 4 pillars:

1. A new dynamic of growth and regional competitiveness clusters: economic zones, renewable energies, mining resources, support for small business, agriculture, tourism, crafts, social and solidarity economy, employment.
2. Inclusive human development: Access to basic social services, human development programs, women's participation in the new development dynamic.
3. Sustainable territorial development: Combating desertification, protected areas, water resources and the development of desalination facilities that respect the environment, national and international connectivity of the southern provinces through the opening up and digital development of the territory, urban planning.
4. Culture as a lever for development: Given the important role played by the Hassani culture in the symbolic and unitary capital of local consciousness and its economic potential, the new model establishes culture as a lever for development and aims to implement the cultural specificity of these provinces to enhance cultural vitality.

Madame Chair,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The realization of economic and social progress and of achievements in the Sahara region, in the framework of advanced regionalization, favor the success of the Autonomy Initiative.

The progress in the execution of the programmed projects shows a high rate in achieving the objectives, thanks to:

- Significant financial commitment: The number of projects started totals more than \$ 4.5 billion, of which more than \$ 3 billion is already financially committed.
- 2019 start-up of 93 projects with a total budget of \$ 1.7 billion.

• The majority of the announced flagship program projects are under construction, namely:

- The biggest Solar energy plants in the world;
- Expressway on 1000 km from Tiznit to Dakhla;
- Industrial Units and Phosboucraa Island Harbor;
- Wind energy sites;
- Dakhla's connection to the national network;
- Fom El Oued Technopole;
- Industrial fishing units.

Madame Chair,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Progress in the Moroccan Sahara region is irreversible and sustainable. Ongoing social and economic development is largely benefiting the local population. It aims to anchor the Sahara region as a platform for economic exchange and promises to make this region an intra-African link and beyond.

These projects are also intended to prepare the ground for the return to the motherland, Morocco, of Sahraouis brothers and sisters, presently in the Tindouf camps, in Algeria, in dignity and respect for their rights, and to enjoy a decent life of democracy, prosperity and social and economic emancipation.

Thank you