

**Committee on the Rights of the Child**

**67<sup>th</sup> SESSION**

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**Address by Mrs. Bassima HAKKAOUI**

**Minister of Solidarity, Women, Family and Social Development**

**Head of the Moroccan Delegation**

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**Mrs. Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of the Child,  
Experts, Members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

At the outset, I would like to express the pleasure of the Delegation of the Kingdom of Morocco in participating in the interactive and constructive dialogue with the members of this Committee, as we proceed to the review of the third and fourth reports on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the second report on the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, on the one hand, and the first report on the Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, on the other hand. This dialogue is part of the continuous interaction of the Kingdom of Morocco with all United Nations Human Rights Mechanisms, including in particular the Committee on the Rights of the Child, with which we have proudly reached an advanced stage of interaction, notably in terms of report presentation.

This dialogue comes at a time marked by a substantial progress in the implementation of the provisions of the Convention at the international level, notably as we celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of this Convention. On this occasion, we are glad to commend your Committee for its relentless efforts to monitor progress in implementing the provisions of the Convention and its two Protocols, in order to ensure the effective implementation of the rights guaranteed by these instruments for children, and to explain and clarify the provisions of the Convention and the challenges and obstacles to complying to them.

In this regard, allow me, first and foremost, to congratulate the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Child for its initiative to dedicate the coming 24 of September to talks to be engaged with children from 16 different countries, during four sessions. No doubt, this initiative will be an outstanding contribution to making children's voices heard through all forms of expression that were defined by the Committee for this dialogue. We will make sure to follow the sessions and collect the various suggestions from the children themselves.

At the national level, and since the review of its second report on the Convention in 2003, and its first report on the first Protocol in 2006, the Kingdom has seen substantial achievements and gains in human rights, including the rights of the child. As an example, it is worth mentioning the Moroccan experience in transitional justice which is listed among the best

practices in the field. This experience is marked by a bold examination of the legacy of serious human rights violations of the past, and reparation of victims through well-defined programs and projects, with due consideration to gender and special attention to child victims.

At the same time, the Kingdom has proceeded to an assessment of 50 years of development, determining the progress made, the obstacles encountered, and the future scenarios in human development. In this context, His Majesty King Mohamed VI inaugurated in 2005 the National Human Development Initiative which set forth the main objectives in relation to childhood, pursuant to a new social policy mainly intended to combat poverty and social exclusion.

The Kingdom has also reformed a number of legislative texts, mainly the Family Code, which has established equality among male and female grandchildren in their right to inherit from their grandparents, among other reforms, the penal code, notably article 475, the Nationality Code now grants Moroccan citizenship to children born from a Moroccan mother and a foreign father, and the Labor Code which prohibits the employment of children under 15, in addition to the law relating to the setup and management of social care institutions and its application decrees which cover child care institutions for children living in different conditions, and the decree on reviewing the list of hazardous occupations prohibiting the employment of minors under 18 years of age.

In this context, the Government has also recently drafted a bill for domestic workers, and another bill to combat violence against women which includes several measures of protection for young girls.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Concerning the promotion of the right of the child to a safe and healthy life, Morocco has made significant efforts towards limiting maternal and neonatal mortality rates, by improving access to reproductive health care, infant care, effective care in pregnancy and childbirth, control of contagious and dangerous diseases, and providing free universal immunization for children in urban and rural areas. These efforts enabled Morocco to improve the health status of Moroccan families, particularly maternal and child health, as it is shown by a number of indicators, notably those concerning neonatal mortality rate (from one to twelve months),

which dropped significantly from 26 deaths per 1000 live births during the period 1987-1991 to 7.1 deaths per 1000 live births in 2011.

The right to education for all children is one of the main nationwide projects designed to meet the challenge of broadening education services, improve their quality, increase schooling and upgrade educational and pedagogic support, especially for schoolchildren living in precarious conditions, and combat school dropouts.

Thanks to these various efforts, school enrolment indicators have improved in the following way:

- School enrolment in primary education increased from 90.5% in 2008-2009 to 96.6% in 2011-2012 ;
- Enrolment in junior secondary schools in rural areas increased from 42.7% in the 2008/2009 to 53.9% in the school year 2011/2012, with a relative increase in the average enrolment rate of girls in junior secondary schools by 8.5%.

With regards to child protection, Morocco made significant progress towards strengthening child protection from neglect, violence, and all forms of exploitation, notably through providing a range of answers and services offered by various stakeholders, based essentially on legal protection and the setup of outreach structures to listen, guide and sponsor child victims, as well as on conducting prevention programs and awareness-raising campaigns and activities, focusing on child dignity and the child's balanced physical and psychological growth.

In this context, a new generation of services, such as structures that provide legal advice to women and children in court, units for integrated care services to women and children victims of violence in public hospitals, services to combat cybercrime, units at the national police headquarters for psychological support to children victims of violence, structures for listening and mediation in educational institutions, focal points for child labor control at labor inspection agencies, child protection units, mobile social aid services, and a family support fund for the protection of children during divorce while guaranteeing their basic needs.

To improve service quality in child care institutions, a new scheme was initiated for the reform of the social care centers system, while dedicating a special dimension to child

reception institutions (for abandoned children, children with disabilities, children in difficult conditions in general). In this context, an institutional diagnostic was carried out based on a participatory and consultative approach with stakeholders, in addition to developing a plan for the reform of the social care centers system.

To protect immigrant children, the government initiated an integrated migration policy based on a humanitarian and human rights approach. In this context, three bills were drafted on human trafficking, asylum and migration, in addition to other qualitative programs intended to provide social and educational services to immigrants and their children.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In order to empower women and girls, and to combat violence practiced against them, the government has started implementing the Government plan for equality towards parity « Ikram » 2012-2016. This plan includes several measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls, combat all forms of violence, and achieve equal access to services and rights.

As far as the right to participation is concerned, Morocco has been able to ensure the right of children to participate and express their opinion on a number of issues of concern to them. In this context, we can only express our pride at the creation of the Children's Parliament in Morocco in 1999, under the supervision of Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Meryem, President of the National Observatory for the Rights of the Child, and Goodwill Ambassador to UNESCO. The parliament has become a learning experience for children for education on democracy, citizenship and active participation.

As far as the right to entertainment is concerned, it is worth mentioning the children's participation in audiovisual programs and the creation of educational and entertaining radio and television broadcast programs. In addition, public stakeholders, local governments and NGOs have been keen to secure a number of children spaces in cultural centres, sport stadiums, summer camps, and national festivals for children.

## **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In compliance with the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of Child in 2003, and the commitments ensuing from the extraordinary session of United Nations General Assembly on the Child, held in May 2002, especially the Declaration and International Action Plan for building up a « World Fit For Children » by the year 2015, Morocco focused its attention on preparing a national action plan for children “ Morocco Fit For Its Children” for the period 2006-2015. This action plan which was adopted by the Government Council in March 2006 had been elaborated on the basis of a participatory approach involving various concerned government sectors as well as various national stakeholders concerned with children’s issues, in addition to the United Nations System in Morocco, and children themselves. In this regard, the contribution of the National Observatory for the Rights of the Child was and still is great importance in this field.

As part of that plan, a Ministerial Committee on Children was created and is chaired by the Head of the Government, which helped strengthen the role played by the plan which became a referential framework for public policy and a tool for coordination among the various sectors with a view to promoting the rights of the child.

In the same context, Morocco conducted the first evaluation of the plan in 2008, two years after its adoption, discussed it with various stakeholders during the 12<sup>th</sup> National Conference on the Rights the the Child, and reviewed monitoring indicators in 2010. In 2011, Morocco proceeded to a mid-term evaluation and discussion of the results with various concerned stakeholders during the 13<sup>th</sup> National Conference on the Rights of the Child. The Naltional Action Plan on Childhood as such enabled our country to achieve a number of significant accomplishments in the promotion of the rights of the child to good health and safe living conditions, the right to growth and education, and the right to participation.

Morocco’s mid-term evaluation of the National Plan of Action for Children in 2011, was an opportunity to evaluate the results and develop a future vision. The evaluation showed the limits of the sector-based approach in providing effective and efficient protection for all children, and recommended giving priority to protection in the second stage of this plan.

In this context, the Government, through the Ministry of Solidarity, Women, Family, and Social Development, and with the support of UNICEF, launched a broad process of consultations to prepare a draft integrated public policy for the protection of children at the beginning of 2013. These consultations involved various concerned stakeholders, at the central and local level, NGO's, the private sector and international partners.

Children themselves were involved in this process through a broad nationwide consultation, in accordance with international standards, whereby children voiced their opinions and suggestions which were taken into consideration in designing this project of great interest to them in the first place. The results of these consultations were considered during the meetings of the Ministerial Committee on Children, chaired by the Head of the Government in July 2013, then in January 2014.

These consultations were crowned with the organization of the first National Conference on the draft Integrated Public Policy on Child Protection, in cooperation with UNICEF in April 2014, under the theme « Children, our Present and Future... Let's protect Them ». In addition to covering the various components of the draft public policy, the conference focused on levers for the implementation, through partnerships with the civil society, stronger communication and notification mechanisms, convergence of international cooperation programs, and strengthening corporate social responsibility.

The conference constituted an opportunity to mobilize different stakeholders, ranging from Members of Parliament to representatives of government sectors and the private sector, media players, representatives of international organizations and associations working on child-specific issues, and local elected officials, as well as children.

Thus, Morocco will boast an integrated public policy to protect children, designed to provide adequate Government answers to the protection of children from all forms of violence, aggression, neglect, and exploitation, including sexual exploitation, pursuant to the new Constitutional provisions, the international conventions ratified by Morocco, and the objectives set forth in the Government Program for 2012-2016.

This public policy is also aimed at building the foundations for an integrated child

protection system that bolsters prevention and protection, targets children and families, and provides for different forms of action at local and central levels. This child protection system revolves around five strategic areas:

- Consolidating the legal framework for child protection and strengthening its effectiveness,
- Setting up standards for services and practices;
- Setting up integrated territorial mechanisms for child protection;
- Promoting social values that protect the rights of the child;
- Setting up effective and standardized information systems for regular monitoring and evaluation.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In the line of its staunch attachment to human rights as they are universally recognized, the Kingdom of Morocco has continued to adhere to the international treaties and protocols pertaining to human rights in general and to the Rights of the Child in particular, including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol, the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Optional Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, in addition to signing the Third Optional Protocol to the Convention of the Rights of the Child in 2012. The Kingdom has also continued its interaction with all the UN human rights mechanisms.

Morocco has been keen to improve the rate of submission of its periodic reports to treaty bodies, interact with their recommendations, and open-up to the Human Rights Council Special Procedures. In this respect, and since the beginning of this millennium, Morocco has received nine of these special procedures within the framework of field visits, including visits in direct connection with our current subject, such as that of the Working Group on Discrimination against Women in law and in reality (February 2012), and the visit of the Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (June 2013).

The Kingdom has been able to ensure such harmony in its interaction with all these mechanisms thanks to the Inter-ministerial Delegation for Human Rights, created in 2011, in keeping with the recommendations proposed by the High Commissioner's Office in the framework of strengthening the Treaty body system. This mechanism has been instrumental

in designing a comprehensive strategic plan for following up the implementation the recommendations made by the abovementioned UN human rights mechanisms, including those relating to women and children.

Morocco has additionally engaged in the ratification process of a number of Council of Europe Conventions. In this regard, the Kingdom accessed to three Council of Europe Conventions in direct connection to the right of the child in 2013, namely the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (the Lanzarote Convention), the Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights, and the Convention on Contact concerning Children.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

This broad path of cumulative reforms, in which the Kingdom of Morocco has engaged has enabled the consolidation of the constitutional, legislative and institutional framework relating to the protection and promotion of human rights, and contributed to strengthening the democratic construction process, as part of His Majesty King Mohammed VI's reform-centered philosophy based on progression and sustainability.

The Kingdom's new Constitution of 2011 has represented a qualitative move in this process, for it included a genuine charter of fundamental rights and freedoms, notably in terms of combatting all forms of discrimination, working towards realizing gender parity, the creation of constitutional bodies for the protection and promotion of human rights, particularly the National Human Rights Council and the Kingdom's Mediator Institute (the ombudsman), in line with the recommendations of your Committee in 2003, in addition to other new bodies which have been entrusted with promoting the rights of various social groups, in particular children, women, youths and persons with disabilities.

As far as the rights of the child are concerned, the Constitution has upgraded these rights into constitutional rights, while stressing **the State's efforts to "...ensure equal legal protection, as well as social and moral consideration for all children, regardless of their family status"**.

In its endeavor to implement the Constitution's provisions in this respect, the Government has elaborated two draft laws, one on the Consultative Council on the Family and the Child, and

the second on the Authority in charge of Parity and Combating all Forms of Discrimination. These two draft bills have been elaborated in a participatory manner with civil society representatives, experts and all other stakeholders.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In accordance also with the provisions of the Constitution, a plan to reform the judicial system was launched, which devoted a large part to juvenile justice and family justice, and sought to ensure fair trials, within the framework of a national dialogue under the supervision of a High Committee which was installed by His Majesty the King and which reflected in its composition the participatory approach for which the Kingdom of Morocco has opted in several other projects. In this context, the penal code is under ongoing reform, towards greater compliance with international human rights standards.

The new constitution has granted new roles and specific responsibilities to non-governmental organizations, according to a distinct vision of participatory democracy. Non-governmental organizations have indeed become genuine, strategic and effective partners to public stakeholders.

In this context, and in order to implement the pertaining provisions of the Constitution, a large national dialogue has taken place which gave rise to several recommendations and proposals encompassing the legislative, organizational and procedural aspects, as well as setting up common rules of governance and participatory democracy, with a view to ensuring the effective participation of non-governmental organizations in legislative initiatives, and monitoring and evaluation of public policy.

On this occasion, I would like to commend all Moroccan associations and their partners within their networks and coalitions, for the parallel reports they have elaborated, and reaffirm our commitment to taking the pertinent proposals contained in these reports into consideration.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The world is shocked on a daily basis to see such a large number of innocent children who, in view of the geographical milieu in which they were born, are forcibly thrown in hotbeds of

conflicts and armed confrontations, with all the resulting consequences of military recruitment, unjust siege, exile or displacement. They are put to death and left with no other choice, or are exposed to either physical or psychological injuries, with dramatic and devastating effects to them, sometimes for life, instead of fully enjoying their childhood and their right to life, protection and education. For its part, Morocco which considers that military service is not compulsory, that it should not concern children and that it should be exclusively limited to adults, reiterates its appeal to people of conscience to urgently take common and collective action to put an end to all these tragedies resulting from the recruitment of children in armed conflicts.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The Kingdom of Morocco takes pride in its cooperation with the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and intends to continue to consider dialogue with the committee as an opportunity to draw benefit from the expertise it has accumulated. Our dialogue with you, during these sessions, will undoubtedly contribute to deepening and expanding the horizon of thinking with a view to consolidating efforts continuously made by the public authorities in the field of protection and promotion of the rights of the child, and assisting them in addressing challenges encountered.

The Kingdom of Morocco, while pursuing its engagement in the international human rights system, especially the rights of the child, considers that the most appropriate approach in this field consists in intensifying and consolidating international cooperation, and in sharing experiences and expertise so as to instill the principles and constituents of the best interest of the child in national policies and programs.

**Thank you for your attention.**