

**PROSPECTS OF THE RELATIONS BETWEEN MOROCCO AND THE
UNITED-STATES**

**OPENNING REMARKS BY IRES' DIRECTOR GENERAL
M. MOHAMMED TAWFIK MOULINE**

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Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure and honor to welcome you today to the Royal Institute for Strategic Studies (IRES), on the occasion of this conference, which is about the prospects of the relations between Morocco and the United-States of America.

I would like to say special thanks to His Excellency Mr. David GREENE, Chargé d’Affaires of the U.S. Embassy in Morocco for his support to this conference.

This conference will be devoted to examining a number of issues of common interest, including, in particular, the levers to enhance bilateral relations and strengthen economic and political cooperation within the framework of the U.S.-Morocco Strategic Dialogue. It also provides an opportunity for us to celebrate the ongoing bond between the two countries which share a number of common values such as democracy, commitment to international security and peaceful conflict resolution.

This conference on Morocco-U.S. relations falls within the scope of His Majesty King Mohammed VI’s Message of August 30th, 2013, calling upon the Royal Institute for Strategic Studies (IRES) to devote its efforts to the diplomatic field as well as to various issues of international relations facing Morocco.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The main task of IRES is to contribute to the decision-making process related to Morocco’s strategic issues. Its mission is to conduct analyses of such issues that are being referred to IRES by His Majesty the King of Morocco.

Our think-tank is therefore entrusted with the task of acting as a strategic monitor, both at a national and international level, in fields deemed important for our country. It analyses structural domestic issues, examines Morocco’s external relations from a multi-dimensional point of view, and also attaches great importance to global issues.

In the current context of radical political changes and high uncertainty, understanding the foreign policy of Morocco’s main partners, and specifically the United States, is extremely important for IRES, so as to help political leaders in the decision-making process to strengthen bilateral relations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Maghreb, in general, has been on the edge of the United States’ foreign policy for decades; however, changes in the region since the Arab spring uprisings made it increasingly central for the United States in terms of security, counterterrorism and political reforms in the region. Consequently, the United States

is more engaged in the region today than at any time since the height of World War II.

The U.S. interest for the Maghreb and Morocco in particular is mainly due to the geographic location, a chokepoint at the crossroads of three regions which are strategic to the United States: The Middle East, Southern Europe and sub-Saharan Africa. Developments in these regions have got a strong and a direct impact on the United States and its allies. Europe's migration crisis, insecurity in the Sahel and the safe passage of shipping through the strait of Gibraltar are examples of U.S. foreign policy concerns. The stability and the progress of Maghreb serve a wide range of U.S. global interests.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The United States' deep ties with Morocco, stretching back to the XVIII century, have grown in the Cold War to reach lately, the premise of a strategic partnership between the two countries.

Morocco and the United States have established relations through opening its sea ports to American ships by decree of Sultan Mohammed III in 1777. In 1786, Morocco signed a treaty of peace and friendship with United States, the longest unbroken relationship in U.S. history.

The historical depth of bilateral relations between Morocco and the United States have allowed the two countries to enhance their cooperation in many aspects.

The relations between Morocco and the U.S. have generally been characterized by their positive development and the convergence of the two countries' views in the multilateral organizations. Bilateral relations between the two countries have been strengthened through the signature of a number of cooperation agreements on technical, scientific, economic and cultural dimensions.

The joint statement, agreed during the Royal visit to Washington in November 2013, is a road map that opens up favorable prospects for the future of the cooperation with the United States. Its implementation, on the other hand, will provide an additional impetus to the bilateral cooperation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today, more than hundred American companies operate in Morocco, particularly in the renewable energy, infrastructure, aeronautic, and environmental technology sectors.

The trade exchange between Morocco and U.S amounted to 1 billion dollars in 2000 and increased to 5.8 billion dollars in 2018. Despite the significant increase that has marked the last 18 years, the Moroccan-U.S. trade represent only 7% of total Moroccan trade. In 2006, the Morocco free-trade agreement (FTA) with the United States went into effect. Since its entry into force, Moroccan exports to the United States and the U.S. exports to Morocco have quadrupled. Today, there is a trade deficit of \$2.5 billion in favor of the U.S.

The non-diversification of the trade is one of the major obstacles to the Moroccan-trade relations. Morocco exports are mainly phosphates, seafood and agro industry products. The main imported products from the U.S are mostly civilian aircraft, gasoline as well as other fuels and petroleum gases.

The economic cooperation could be intensified by ensuring a dynamic and diversifying trade exchanges via investments in new sectors such as tourism, new technologies and those with high added value, in the key export industries known as "world crafts of Morocco", particularly automotive and aeronautics industries, renewable energy, tourism and digital industry.

Ladies and gentlemen

To enhance this cooperation and give a new dynamic to the partnership relations between the two countries, they can cooperate in common areas of interest such as Africa and the MENA.

In the MENA region, Morocco can continue to play a key role in:

- the political mediation in the conflicts of the region;
- fighting terrorism through its ongoing leadership of the Global Counterterrorism Forum and for its sustaining role in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS;
- helping creating a new regional policy of containment toward Iranian influence in the region including in North West Africa.

Concerning Africa, Morocco's commitment to the continent's autonomous development, can enhance the Kingdom's standing in the strategic agenda of Trump administration. Morocco's continental contribution today is multifaceted and is based on peacekeeping, collegial governance, a fresh approach to migration, but also training African students and managing the religious field, are some of the Kingdom's key areas of action. Today Morocco's emergence as a regional hub in many fields (economic, financial, transport, logistics and education) opens up real prospects to let Morocco serve as a platform and gateway for an increasing number of American firms doing business.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The main purpose of this conference is to examine the current situation and to deliver a new perspective on the issues and challenges facing bilateral relations and to explore public policies most likely to foster such relations, thus contributing to shaping a better future.

This conference on relations between the Kingdom of Morocco and the United States of America, will aim to accomplish the following objectives:

- Conduct a diagnosis of the U.S. foreign policy toward the Maghreb and therefore toward Morocco.
- Analyze the dynamics of bilateral relations between the two countries, highlighting their strengths and weaknesses and underlining the key issues that influence these relations.
- Identify opportunities to be seized and risks to be circumvented in order to develop a stronger strategic partnership between the two countries, taking into account the international transformations that are taking place.
- Suggest policy recommendations, particularly in terms of foreign policy that may enhance the current level of partnership, broaden the spectrum of common interests and strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

These are some introductory remarks at the opening of this conference. Thank you very much for your attention.