

Full text of king's message to the 8th National Tourism Forum

Tetouan, June 14 - King Mohammed VI sent a message to the 8th National Tourism Forum which kicked off Saturday in the northern city of Tetouan.

Here follows the full text of the message, which was read out by Prime Minister, Abbas El Fassi.

Praise be to God
His Kith and Kin

Peace and blessings be upon the Prophet,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure once again to send a message to the National Tourism Forum. This important event gives us the opportunity to reaffirm our vision for the development of tourism in Morocco, to take stock of what has been done and to consider future prospects for the development of this strategic sector, which is one of the engines of economic growth, cultural development, comprehensive modernization and preservation of our authentic identity.

I am particularly pleased that this year's session is being held in Northern Morocco, in Tetouan, which is steeped in history and which has a great potential for the development of tourism. The major projects currently under way in the Northern part of the country will, I am sure, make it possible for the region and its inhabitants to benefit from the tourist industry and thus increase the pace of economic and social development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The National Tourism Forum is primarily an opportunity to take stock of our accomplishments and to press ahead with our plans. In this respect, I think we can be quite optimistic about the momentum generated and the strategic objectives of Vision 2010. Despite a sluggish international environment and unfavourable conditions in tourist-emitting countries, 7.4 million tourists visited Morocco in 2007, with overnight stays exceeding 17 million. These figures attest not only to the attractiveness of Morocco as a tourist destination, but also to the country's ability to withstand economic instability, both regional and international.

The keen interest shown in Morocco by many local and foreign operators, professionals and investors also deserves to be underlined. As far as tourist capacity is concerned, achievements have exceeded the objectives initially set. Important projects have supplemented those originally planned. They include the Cala Iris project in the Al Hoceima region, Tamuda Bay near Tetouan, Oued Chbika in Tan Tan and other projects which will soon be launched in Dakhla. Furthermore, investors themselves have formulated requests concerning projects in several other parts of the country.

I am happy to say that all this is rather promising.

We are just as optimistic about the program for the development of local tourism. Indeed, new tourist services which meet the needs of local tourists will further diversify the Moroccan tourist portfolio. In this respect, the necessary measures should be taken as soon as possible for the delegated management of the first Biladi Plan resorts so that they may welcome Moroccan holidaymakers by the year 2012.

I should like to take this opportunity to commend the operators and investors who are working with us in the strategic sector of tourism. With them, we look confidently to the future and know that, together, we have the ability not only to achieve the objectives set, but also to explore new prospects for development. I therefore call on all the stakeholders concerned to speed up the implementation of tourist projects and of plans to increase tourist capacity.

I also urge the state's partners to respect the completion dates stated in the contracts and to honour the agreed quality obligations. I also call upon all the parties concerned to keep up the momentum with regard to the defining projects of Vision 2010 and to the projects relating to domestic tourism.

The reason we are counting on the development of tourism in Morocco is that we have the geographic, natural, cultural and, above all, human resources required to fulfil that ambition. It has always been my firm belief that tourism is an extraordinary source of job creation for our youth, as much as a gateway to modernity, openness and human development for the country in general. From the very beginning, the human element has held centre stage in Vision 2010.

I also attach special importance to the action of the government and of the various operators concerned to develop a human resource policy which truly reflects our ambitions for the development of tourism in Morocco. The role and commitment of the people working in the sector are just as important as infrastructure; without the men and women involved in tourism, nothing in the business can succeed or last.

I am pleased to note, in this respect, that the reform and development of the national system of tourist training colleges and institutes are moving in the right direction. The efficiency of the training system, however, hinges on constant evaluation as well as on the ability to satisfy the specific needs of each region and sector. Training centres must, therefore, take due account of the professional environment around them in order to enhance performance and improve quality, using, to this end, a watchdog mechanism which can help us adjust training modules and ensure the responsiveness of our training institutions.

In addition to being well trained, the human resources involved in tourism must be properly managed and motivated so that every man and woman can work to the best of their abilities and contribute fully to the quality standards we aim for.

We must therefore implement the tourism training plan as quickly as possible by building on a constructive, participatory approach which takes due account of quality standards throughout the Moroccan tourist sector.

I am keen to make sure human resource development goes beyond the trades directly associated with tourism and encompasses other related jobs and amenities. If we want to rise to the challenge of training qualified human resources, we should focus on all the links making up the Moroccan tourism chain.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I have pointed out in the past, the service quality to which we are deeply committed means that we should strive to offer an authentic, environmentally responsible tourist product.

Whether we view it from the natural, human or cultural angle, tourism must develop in a responsible manner in order to be sustainable. It is, indeed, our duty to contribute to all aspects of environmental protection, and to make sure our projects fulfil the twin obligation of ensuring tourist development and of preserving the environment and natural resources.

In this connection, I wish to mention in particular the measures taken within the framework of the Moroccan Charter for responsible tourism. This Charter, which was endorsed by many national and international stakeholders, has helped make Morocco a sustainable tourist destination.

I therefore call on all the parties and operators concerned to embrace this civic-minded approach, which is not only environment-friendly but also fulfils the requirements of sustainable human development.

May the Almighty guide your steps and grant you success.

Wassalamu alaikum warahmatullah wabarakatuh.