HM the King Addresses Message to Participants in UNESCO’s 7th International Conference on Adult Education

His Majesty King Mohammed VI addressed, on Wednesday, a message to the participants in UNESCO’s Seventh International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTA VII), which is taking place in Marrakech under the theme “Adult learning and education for sustainable development – A transformative agenda.” Here follows the full text of the Royal message, which was read out by the Head of Government, Aziz Akhannouch.

"May peace and blessings be upon the Prophet, His Kith and Kin

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I should like to say how proud we are that the Seventh International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTA VII), which is convened under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization - UNESCO -, is taking place in the Kingdom of Morocco. This is the first time an Arab or African country has been given such an honor.

I should like to welcome the eminent figures, government officials, representatives of international organizations and institutions, experts and specialists taking part in this important conference and to say how much I appreciate their tireless efforts, each in their field of competence, to promote and develop adult learning and education.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the special partnership and cooperation that have always existed between the Kingdom of Morocco and UNESCO. We are keen to deepen and strengthen those relations to cover various scientific, educational and cultural domains.

The convening of this conference, to which I have granted my high patronage to show the great importance I attach to this sector, and the theme chosen for this year’s conference, Adult learning and education for sustainable development – A transformative agenda, surely constitute a special moment for reflection, examination and exchange of views on a vast gamut of related issues.

This is also an opportunity to assess our countries’ achievements in this field and explore the most appropriate ways to formulate effective policies for adult learning and education, in light of the concept of lifelong learning, and thus contribute to meeting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
Given the rapid changes affecting the world, it has become necessary today to give adults lifelong opportunities to acquire new skills that effectively empower them to improve their living and health conditions, and thus enjoy decent lives.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I believe the convening of this international conference in the Kingdom of Morocco supports the efforts my country has been making to provide quality lifelong education for all Moroccan children, starting with primary education. The latter is a pillar of lifelong learning and is a key entry point for achieving excellence in the field of education and training.

In this regard, the Kingdom of Morocco attaches special importance to the education of youth, providing them with a vast gamut of learning opportunities that guarantee their right to acquire the qualifications they need for economic integration, and to gain the knowledge and skills required for social advancement. This protects them from the scourge of ignorance and poverty, as well as from any inclination towards extremism or reclusiveness.

The Kingdom has also sought to step up efforts to promote vocational training opportunities for young people and adopt training modules in various areas of specialization. The aim is to meet the needs of the public and private sectors, while keeping abreast of progress in science and knowledge acquisition in general. Changes in society and in professions and trades should also be taken into account, thus giving youth better opportunities for professional integration.

Furthermore, and in order to enable young people to continue to learn and to benefit from training for longer periods of time, especially for those who drop out of school, the initiative entitled Second Chance Schools - New Generation for Education and Rehabilitation has been launched. The initiative combines school and workplace experience to support and accompany every young man or woman’s individual professional project.

The national program for the promotion of literacy falls within the same context. Targeting a broad category of citizens - male and female alike - the program seeks to do more than just teaching people to read and write. It aims to facilitate the integration of target groups into the labor market through training courses that enable beneficiaries to hone their skills in certain trades and ensure capacity building in setting up cooperatives and developing income-generating projects.

The Kingdom of Morocco also seeks to facilitate women’s access to education and ensure their economic empowerment for life, so they may contribute effectively to development, increase their capabilities and achieve their personal ambitions.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

By hosting this international conference, the Kingdom of Morocco confirms its active involvement in the actual implementation of the principle of lifelong learning. This goal was given concrete substance on the ground when the cities of Chefchaouen and Benguerir joined the Global Network of Learning cities, and when Morocco was granted a UNESCO Chair thanks to the establishment of an observatory of lifelong learning. This was also in recognition of its contribution to the preparation of mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating learning abilities, in partnership with the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning.

Furthermore, there is remarkable vibrancy in the Kingdom of Morocco thanks to the cooperation and concerted efforts of all stakeholders, including the public and private sectors, universities, local governments, civil society organizations and international partners. All actors seek to ensure the implementation of policies and programs for adult learners.

In this regard, I have always sought to make sure quality education is provided to all Moroccans, from all social backgrounds and age brackets - an education that enables them to be part of the knowledge and communication-based world, that prepares them properly for professional life, and that contributes to individual and collective advancement.

It should be pointed out, in this regard, that the New Development Model adopted by my country has created strong momentum and given a fresh start to this sector. The Model seeks to pave the way for an educational
revival with a view to guaranteeing and strengthening the human capital that will drive development, while
opening up promising prospects for the future.

The achievement of these goals requires awareness of the increasingly important status of science and
knowledge, which are key determinants of development and economic growth in an age characterized by rapid
technological transformations. This requires a proper command of new and ever-changing skills and
qualifications. Our efforts in this regard are enhanced by making civic education and values a core element of the
Moroccan educational project, by consolidating the mechanisms relating to education, training, integration, and
funding of activities for women, and by strengthening pathways leading to lifelong education and training in order
to enhance the skills and capabilities of every Moroccan citizen.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Seventh International Conference provides a precious opportunity to promote dialogue and discuss
challenges relating to the future of adult learning and education.

It is our distinct pleasure to propose, for this session, the adoption of a new framework - the Marrakech
Framework for Action - named after the city hosting your conference. This Framework should provide guidance
for adult learning and education into the next decade. It should serve as a reference document and roadmap for
the coming 12 years, putting adult learners at the heart of education policies and enshrining the principle of
lifelong learning as a key lever for the accelerated achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Conscious of the need to strengthen and coordinate follow-up to the implementation of the Marrakech Framework
for Action directives, and in order to keep up the momentum created by this international conference, the
Kingdom of Morocco proposes the setting up of a post-CONFINTEA VII ministerial committee. It would meet once
a year and make sure all the recommendations made by the conference are actually implemented, especially at
the regional level.

In line with that vision and that approach, and to further enhance Morocco’s commitment in the area of lifelong
learning, my country also proposes the launching of an African initiative to strengthen South-South coordination
and cooperation in the field of adult learning and lifelong education, in the form of an African Institute for Lifelong
Learning.

This institute would serve as a regional capacity-building center for regional stakeholders, institutions and
organizations operating in the field of lifelong learning. It would facilitate the exchange of success stories as well
as the sharing of knowledge and experiences in the field of adult learning and education, especially at the level of
African learning cities, and the promotion, through them, of cooperation relations with similar cities around the
world.

The institute would also work with local stakeholders, including political decision-makers, professionals, heads of
NGOs and researchers in order to evaluate public policies in the area of lifelong learning at a continental level,
building on an approach that puts learners and trainers - male and female alike - at the center of its priorities.

I am convinced this conference will provide a precious opportunity to discuss best practices, devise new, realistic
solutions and approaches, and make proposals and recommendations that will contribute to improving the future
of adult learning and education and guarantee the right to lifelong learning for all.

Once again, welcome to your home away from home. I wish your conference every success.

Thank you.

Wassalamu alaikum warahmatullah wabarakatuh.*

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