

## Conference

### “Migration and climate change: which relationship?”

Rabat, 30 April 2024

Speech by Theodoros Rousopoulos

President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

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Monsieur le Président de la Chambre des Représentants du Parlement du Maroc,

Monsieur le Président de la Chambre des Conseillers du Parlement du Maroc,

Madame l’Ambassadrice de l’Union Européenne au Maroc,

Distinguished members of the Parliaments of Morocco, Armenia, and Switzerland,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am particularly honoured and happy with the choice of visiting the Parliament of Morocco, as my first visit since I was elected to a non-European Parliament.

Our Assembly and the Parliament of Morocco have shared a long and very fruitful partnership, the so-called « Partnership for democracy » since 2011.

I take this opportunity to salute the very active participation of the members of the Moroccan Parliamentary delegation in the activities of the Parliamentary Assembly, and I am happy to see some of the most active members in the audience today.

I firmly believe in this partnership, which brought to the Strasbourg hemicycle the voices of the Moroccan parliament and helped our European members to see their problems from a different perspective.

Together, over the last, almost thirteen years, we have organised many initiatives where the members of your Parliament, and the members of our Assembly, have exchanged their point of views and experiences, and compared how common issues, such as inter alia, migration, the one we are discussing today, are dealt with on your continent and in Europe.

I think that today, our cooperation is at a turning point. Mr El Alami, President of the House of representatives, I heard, loud and clear, your request for a closer partnership and a more active role for the members of your Parliament.

I think the time is ripe to move forward to a new phase of our partnership.

At the next meeting of its Standing Committee taking place in Vilnius at the end of May, our Parliamentary Assembly will discuss the ways and means to grant to the Moroccan Parliament a larger set of possibilities to participate even more actively and on a different ground to our activities.

I will have the pleasure and the task to inform you of the outcome of our meeting.

But today, we are gathered not only to celebrate a new beginning of our partnership, but also the conclusion and the results of our joint Programme “Support for the development of the role of the Parliament in consolidating democracy in Morocco”.

This programme was launched in 2020, with the financial support of the European Union, which I take the opportunity to warmly thank for its unconditional support, and was implemented by the Parliament of Morocco and our Assembly.

There were three main objectives for this common endeavour:

1. Support the efforts of the Moroccan Parliament in the effective exercise of monitoring and evaluation of public policies.
2. Support the openness of the Parliament to citizens, civil society and other partners and effectively promote participatory democracy in Morocco.
3. Support Morocco’s parliamentary diplomacy and strengthen the Moroccan Parliament’s inter parliamentary dialogue with its counterparts in neighbouring countries and Council of Europe member States.

Over the last three years we have had the opportunity to exchange and share with the Moroccan Parliament, the knowledge, the experience, and the initiatives taken by the Parliaments of PACE member States to tackle different issues:

For example:

1. recently, we organised a workshop in co-operation with the Venice Commission where we presented the experiences of the parliaments of France, Switzerland and Morocco in evaluating public policies and following up in their evaluation reports;
2. also, thanks to the project, a delegation of Moroccan parliamentarians and staff had the chance to visit the United Kingdom and Portugal to get to know the work of these parliaments regarding petitions and motions, and more generally with reference to the importance of investing more energy to build a relationship of trust between citizens and their parliaments;
3. last year, the PACE network of contact parliamentarians for a healthy environment held one of its meetings in Marrakech where PACE members could learn about the experience and commitment of Morocco in combating climate change and protecting citizens from its dramatic effects.

These were indeed very interesting opportunities to learn from each other’s good practices and positive examples.

Through this project, we were able to provide the Moroccan Parliament with some new instruments to better perform their tasks, such as the creation of the new platform at the House of Representatives for the introduction of petitions and motions to the Parliament, and to increase the visibility and the knowledge of the wider public of the initiatives of the Parliaments, through the new website of the House of Councillors, which is in progress right now.

Soon we will also conclude the preparation of a new media box for the Parliament of Morocco, the same as the one we have in Strasbourg.

It will be a small TV studio at the disposal of the members of the Parliament of Morocco, where they will be able to record speeches, interviews and in this way to improve the visibility of their work and of the role and activities of the Parliament.

All these activities would not even have been planned without the strong support of the women and men who make up the Moroccan Parliament. I want to take this opportunity to thank all the colleagues of the House of Representatives and the House of Councillors, from your Presidents and Secretaries General, to all your staff who made the implementation of this project so smooth and successful. And I will not forget the colleagues from our Assembly, who in Rabat and in Strasbourg, worked very professionally for the implementation of this programme.

Our special thanks go to the European Union for its unconditional support to this programme, with the hope that there may be a follow-up to it, drawing on the very successful results.

But let us now move to the reason why we are gathered here together today. As the last event of our programme, we are going to hold a debate on the links between migration and the environmental crisis. We will soon hear what is done by Morocco and by the Council of Europe member States to tackle these issues, which go beyond the physical borders of our countries.

We have already witnessed that climate change has an adverse impact on the living conditions of millions of people. Rising sea levels, worsening desertification, lack of drinking water, and other environment-related threats may also spark conflicts, giving rise to competition for access to resources.

Our Assembly has already taken steps to combat the effects of climate change and natural disasters, with the aim notably to prevent mass displacement of populations by proposing concrete solutions to States beyond Europe. It is undoubtable that adequate action for climate adaptation and mitigation would help the affected populations feel safe and not forced to flee their homeland.

Our Assembly has underlined that human rights protection for people, who are forced to migrate due to climate-change-induced disasters or hardship, should be enhanced. Particular attention should be paid to the needs of the most vulnerable: children, persons with disabilities, women, and the elderly. States should prevent environment degradation that multiplies the effects of climate change. Science and technology should be better used to serve people and save lives. In this regard, States could better assess migration trends and anticipate new developments through dynamic mapping of climate change and migration. Development co-operation and emergency support in the countries of origin of migrants should also help prevent climate-change-induced migration, develop resilience to climate disasters in these countries, and protect climate migrants.

Political and legal decisions have crossed paths on climate change after the recent landmark judgment of the European Court of Human Rights, *Verein KlimaSeniorinnen Schweiz and Others v. Switzerland*, where the Court found that Article 8 of the Convention on the right to privacy and family life encompasses a right to effective protection by the State authorities from the serious adverse effects of climate change on lives, health, well-being and quality of life.

Thanks to its geographical position, Morocco is pivotal in addressing some of these issues. Already, innovative approaches have been undertaken by using solar energy to produce electricity. Morocco is also a country which has done a lot to integrate migrants from sub-Saharan.

The African Migration Observatory, aiming to facilitate the implementation of the Marrakech Global Compact on Migration, is an excellent tool to strengthen the contribution of migration to sustainable development. It is also important for deconstructing the negative perception linked to migration by founding a new positive and objective approach to the matter, while highlighting the human asset, as a lever for the development of the African Continent.

We can face these challenges together. We can learn from each other. I look forward to our discussion today.

In conclusion, I want to thank again you, Presidents, and the whole Parliament of Morocco, including its staff, for the fruitful cooperation with our Assembly, since 2011. I am sure our cooperation will go beyond the conclusion of this very successful programme.

I would like to see our cooperation having a new start on an improved legal basis. We would be very happy to finally see a member of the Parliament of Morocco, table a motion, present a report, chair one of the PACE Networks in the near future.