



Kingdom of Morocco
Ministry of Foreign Trade



Economic Commission for Africa
Office for North Africa

North Africa Development Forum

Trade for Growth and Job Creation

Palais des Congrès, Marrakech, Morocco
19-20 February 2007

MARRAKESH DECLARATION

I. Preamble

We the participants in the North Africa Development Forum on Trade for Growth and Job Creation organised in Marrakesh, Kingdom of Morocco, on 19 and 20 February 2007 by the Subregional Office for North Africa of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa,

Commending the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco and their partners for the opportunity provided for us at the Forum to contribute to the debate on key development issues in North Africa,

Commending the initiatives taken to bring private business transactors together, especially with the recent creation of the Maghreb Employers Union,

Having noted with interest the analyses, conclusions and recommendations contained in the documents provided to us by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa on the occasion of the Forum,

Noting that, in spite of the recovery of subregional economic growth over the last decade and encouraging progress on the labour front in several countries of the subregion, unemployment rates, especially among the youth and women, remain high and constitute one of the major development challenges facing the countries of North Africa,

Recognizing that subregional integration is a must if North Africa is to achieve its development objectives, namely, the reduction of unemployment and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals and bring its weight to bear on subregional dynamics in order to become an effective partner in the world economy,

Being persuaded that in an environment of increasingly globalized economies, trade has unquestionably become a driving force for economic development and, backed with adequate policy measures, can help to speed up economic growth and address the challenge of unemployment in addition to facilitating the process of subregional integration,

Being convinced that North Africa possesses considerable potential for exploiting the opportunities offered by world trade, on account of its geographical location and level of development,

Being aware that intra-subregional trade among the countries of North Africa holds a vast potential yet to be tapped and may, if focused on a dynamic private sector, become an essential component for the subregional and global integration of the countries of North Africa,

Noting with concern that notwithstanding cultural and historical links which bind the countries of North Africa and trade agreements as well as subregional integration initiatives, North Africa, compared with other regions of the world, remains the least integrated subregional bloc with trade flows accounting for a minimal fraction of the total trade of each of the countries,

Stressing the imperative need for North Africa, within the coming years, to take such coordinated, speedy, sequenced and realistic measures as would give concrete expression to its policy commitments and objectives and translate its subregional integration aspirations into reality,

Adopt this Marrakesh Declaration as an action framework to create an enabling environment for increasing the volume of trade among North African countries and integrate them into the global economy, the ultimate objective of the Marrakesh Declaration being to comply with the requirement for growth acceleration and employment creation sufficient to secure the wellbeing of the people of North Africa.

To meet the challenges impeding trade promotion and subregional integration as well as the creation of more jobs in North Africa, we recommend that :

II. General recommendations :

1. The effective participation of all stakeholders especially private sector, financial sector, civil society, young business people, women entrepreneurs, and skilled North Africans in the Diaspora, should be encouraged in the formulation and implementation of the strategies and policies for trade integration,
2. The gender dimension should be mainstreamed into trade promotion policies and strategies and women entrepreneurs involved in decision-making
3. Public-private partnerships should adopted as the structural approach,
4. Those economic sectors having the potential to promote North African cooperation and integration should be identified and public-private partnerships encouraged to facilitate the emergence of North African transnational business groups with particular emphasis on SMEs and SMIs,
5. Efforts should be intensified to coordinate economic, institutional and legal reforms within the subregion as a way of creating an enabling environment for trade promotion, productive employment creation and mainstreaming of the informal economy,
6. Coordination and dialogue should be intensified among North Africa countries in order to strengthen their bargaining position in multilateral negotiations,

7. Opportunities for information and experience-sharing among North African countries should be created and better access to the related data and statistics secured,
8. The media should be sensitized to the strategic importance of subregional integration and intra-subregional trade in order to promote decent employment and secure the sustainable development of countries in the subregion,
9. Special action should be pursued to encourage small and medium-sized businesses, especially those run by young people and women,
10. South-South cooperation (especially with the rest of Africa) should be promoted with all regions of the world,
11. Good governance should be promoted among institutions, particularly financial institutions involved in the promotion of international trade, especially of intra-subregional trade,
12. More systematic use should be made of information and communication technologies with a view to speeding up and enhancing the participation of countries of the subregion in the knowledge economy,
13. The training level of human capital in the subregion should be improved and North African expertise sharpened, especially within universities and research centres through networking,
14. Research and studies into all dimensions of subregional integration and trade should be intensified,
15. Technical and financial resources for the implementation of action arising from this action framework should be mobilised from donor countries, funding agencies and development partners.

III. SPECIFIC ACTION

a. Action by member States: Governments, private sector and civil society

1. Identify sectors in which North African structure-building projects can be implemented in the shortest possible time,
2. Support and strengthen the (economic and social) subregional integration observatory developed by the ECA Office for North Africa by integrating into it by network existing country data
3. Establish a process for harmonising financial regulations and easing trade procedures,
4. Organize training sessions on banking governance along the lines of the Bale II provisions,
5. Institute cooperation programmes among subregional SMEs and develop financing machinery suited to their needs,
6. Establish North African university campuses,

7. Institute a process for taking concerted subregional action to promote service sector development,
8. Forge effective partnerships between the countries of origin and receiving countries of North African migrants in order to identify the most appropriate ways of tapping the human resource, social, financial and skills potential of North Africans resident abroad and transforming that into productive capital for investment, trade and employment,
9. Support and own the process for establishing a subregional e-commerce platform.

b. Action by ECA

10. Joint action between ECA and such subregional economic communities as AMU and CENSAD should be intensified,
16. Follow-up and evaluation studies should be conducted to assess the impact of intra-subregional trade in North Africa, particularly on employment and entrepreneurship promotion
17. A programme of cooperation with private subregional business transactors should be instituted to promote intra-subregional trade, more particularly with the Maghreb Employers Union,
18. A study should be conducted to identify innovative ways and means for infrastructure to play fully the role of speeding up subregional integration,
19. A study should be conducted on the impact that the establishment of a free trade area in North Africa would have,
20. Greater technical support should be provided to North African countries in the area of international trade negotiations and their impact regularly reported on,
21. A study group should be launched to conduct a situational assessment of financial systems in North Africa and to identify joint action to be taken,
22. A forum for coordination and dialogue among all North African stakeholders (Governments, private sector, financial sector, civil society, young business people, women entrepreneurs and skilled North Africans in the diaspora, should be instituted for regular follow-up and evaluation of the progress made by member States in intra-subregional trade and integration,
23. A community of practice for young entrepreneurs, the financial sector and women entrepreneurs should be established,
24. The e-commerce Platform should be established,
25. Business transactors should be guided and sensitized to the potential offered by ICTs in the trading environment,
26. In collaboration with AMU, efforts being made to harmonise national ICT strategies and to develop e-commerce should be supported as has been done in other African subregions.

The present Declaration shall be submitted to the Bureau of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts of the ECA Office for North Africa for consideration and approval and onward transmission to the ECA Conference of Minister of Finance, Planning and Economic Development which will meet from 29 March to 3 April in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Done at Marrakesh this 20th day of February 2007