

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR OMAR ZNIBER,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE KINGDOM OF
MOROCCO, AT THE SEVENTEENTH MEETING OF THE
OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Athens, 1 and 2 December 2009

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I should like to take this occasion to pay tribute to the Greek Chairmanship for its warm welcome and for its hospitality.

This important Ministerial Council meeting gives us a fresh opportunity to evaluate the OSCE Mediterranean partnership, which is what I shall focus on in my statement.

I should like to recall that Morocco presented its vision of the future of the OSCE Mediterranean partnership in a document of 31 March 2009 entitled “The Future of the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership: The Moroccan Vision” (PC.DEL/213/09/Rev.1), in which we stressed that the OSCE Mediterranean partnership should be more focused on concrete projects and reiterated the need to establish effective mechanisms for implementing the recommendations made at the Mediterranean seminars and conferences and for following through the Ministerial Declaration on the OSCE Partners for Co-operation adopted in Madrid in 2007.

The Moroccan document emphasizes in particular the need to define specific fields of co-operation and proposes in that connection the human, economic and security dimensions of migration, tolerance and non-discrimination through the creation of a centre for the collection of data on the manifestation of all forms of intolerance, particularly against Muslims, co-operation in combating terrorism through the exchange of best practices, and water and energy management.

In order to improve the OSCE Mediterranean partnership, the “Morocco vision paper” also puts forward another series of proposals, including ones concerning the establishment of a network of research and analysis institutes concerned with security in the Mediterranean space, the translation of the principal OSCE reference documents into Arabic and the strengthening of synergy with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

Furthermore, the Moroccan delegation stresses that the projects should have long-term goals rather than being isolated actions. In this regard, it is imperative to begin an

open discussion with the OSCE participating States on their view of co-operation with the Mediterranean partners and the place of the partnership in the dialogue on the new security architecture in Europe. When interests converge there should be joint strategies, and when the interests are different we need to find solutions that the OSCE Mediterranean partnership can benefit from.

Mr. Chairman,

Morocco remains convinced that the OSCE continues to offer the potential needed to institute a more effective Mediterranean partnership with a long-term strategy and vision to deal with the common challenges to security. Within this framework, Morocco's participation in the work of the OSCE is characterized by the active presence of Moroccan experts at the conferences and seminars held by the Organization. Furthermore, Moroccan parliamentarians from both the Chamber of Representatives and the Chamber of Councillors take part in the various sessions organized by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the parallel events specific to the Mediterranean region. In this regard, I should like to commend the quality of the work at the seminar organized under the auspices of the Helsinki Commission in Washington on strengthening the OSCE Mediterranean partnership.

My delegation believes that the OSCE certainly offers a complementary framework to other bodies and institutions concerned with the same issues in the way that the European Union, the "5+5" forum and the Union for the Mediterranean are. Morocco is actively committed to the Union for the Mediterranean, which is notable for its pragmatic approach with specific projects in six priority areas, for a shared leadership thanks to the co-presidency system of one EU country and one non-EU country, and for its participation in the League of Arab States. Permit me at this point to cite Mr. Taib Fassi Fihri, Minister for Foreign Affairs, who recently affirmed Morocco's conviction that the achievement of the Union for the Mediterranean initiative would help the Mediterranean region to emerge as a coherent and united geopolitical bloc and launch an innovative and dynamic regional process.

Mr. Chairman,

The progress achieved by Morocco under the leadership of His Majesty King Mohammed VI in terms of modernizing and opening up the economy, political reforms, human rights and good governance will indubitably boost Morocco's many and varied partnerships with organizations like the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe in a regional context that has seen important events associated with the Mediterranean region such as the revival of the Mediterranean process (in the form of the Union for the Mediterranean) and the granting of advanced status to Morocco by the European Union.

The democratic process taking place in Morocco has been strengthened by a series of reforms launched in consultation with all the sections of civil society. Legal reforms are under way with a view to guaranteeing the independence of the judiciary. As part of the gender equality policy and the family code, the adoption of a strategic action plan for the institutionalization of equality between the sexes and the adoption of a new electoral code are increasing the participation of women in political life, as illustrated by the fact that 3,406 women were elected during the local elections held on 12 June 2009 compared to 127 women in 2003.

As for combating corruption, 2008 saw the establishment of the central anti-corruption authority and the 2009 finance law allocated 1.5 million euros to that body's operations. In offering to host the fourth conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption in Morocco in 2011, my country reiterates its steadfast commitment to combating this scourge.

The momentum created by the reforms in the political, economic, religious, social and cultural spheres has enabled Morocco to find its place in regional and international affairs and has been crowned, among other things, by an institutional breakthrough in its relations with the EU, with Morocco being granted advanced status.

In this regard, allow me to highlight the specific achievements on the way to the granting of this advanced status.

- At the political level, in addition to the creation of a joint parliamentary commission between the Moroccan parliament and its European counterpart, the advanced status granted to Morocco advocates the strengthening of political co-operation between the Kingdom of Morocco and the European Union, better consideration of their respective strategic priorities and the examination of all the possibilities for carrying out joint action in multilateral forums and at the regional level;
- At the economic level through the harmonization of Moroccan and European legislation;
- At the human level through the elaboration of a policy to create an interactive space for civil society associations and the launch of comprehensive strategies to deal with all the issues concerned with migration and protecting the rights of Moroccan expatriates in Europe.

In this respect, Morocco intends to make a constructive contribution in particular to the question of migration and the financial crisis at the OSCE Mediterranean Conference to be held in Cairo on 14 and 15 December 2009.

Mr. Chairman,

My country, which supports all the initiatives aimed at promoting tolerance and interreligious dialogue and combating all forms of discrimination, reiterates the importance of strengthening co-operation between the OSCE and the Alliance of Civilizations.

I should like to take this opportunity to reaffirm our appreciation of the work of the Personal Representatives of the Chairman-in-Office for combating discrimination against Muslims, Jews and Christians as well as the efforts undertaken by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in this area. I should like to reiterate in this context the importance of the Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Information System (TANDIS) established by the ODIHR, but at the same time I should point out the limitations of this tool owing to the lack of statistical data, without which it will be difficult to launch an effective strategy. In 2008, for example, only two participating States provided statistics on discrimination against Muslims.

My delegation welcomes the proposal by Kazakhstan to organize a high-level conference on tolerance and non-discrimination in 2010 and would like to stress the need for a balanced approach, specifically as regards combating discrimination against Muslims, Jews and Christians.

Mr. Chairman,

As for the immediate future of the Mediterranean partnership, we should like to express our support to Kazakhstan and Lithuania as the future Chairmanships of the OSCE in the hope that they will do much to provide a concrete answer to the request by the Palestinian National Authority for Palestine to be awarded the status of an OSCE Mediterranean Partner for Co-operation.

I am convinced that a positive response would constitute an important step towards expanding confidence-building measures in the Mediterranean region and my delegation once again urges all the participating States of the Organization to support the Palestinian request.

Moreover, Morocco reiterates the need for a just and definitive resolution to the conflict between Israel and Palestine, which inevitably involves the creation of a viable Palestinian State with Al Qods as its capital on the basis of the Arab Peace Initiative and the Road Map. My country would like to take this opportunity to condemn the illegal policy of Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories and condemns the Israeli policy of depriving Al Qods Acharif of its Arab character.