

Brussels, 13 October 2008

The European Union and Morocco strengthen their partnership

At the seventh meeting of the EU-Morocco Association Council today, the EU approved a package of measures designed to strengthen the partnership with Morocco. These measures concern in particular cooperation in political and security matters, the preparation of a comprehensive and deeper free trade agreement, the gradual integration of Morocco into a number of EU sectoral policies, and the development of people-to-people exchanges. They are intended to provide material support for the modernisation and democratic transition process that Morocco has been engaged in for a number of years and for which Morocco is requesting more substantial backing from Europe.

At the meeting, Ms Benita Ferrero-Waldner, European Commissioner for external relations and the neighbourhood policy, said: "*Morocco is undertaking a raft of reforms in all areas. It has asked for Advanced Status in our Neighbourhood Policy, stronger links with Europe to consolidate what has already been achieved and to give fresh impetus to its modernisation and democratic transition process. The Commission has done its utmost to respond to Morocco's expectations and we have made a great many proposals in the areas that are within our competence. I welcome their adoption today by the Association Council.*"

At the meeting of the Association Council in July 2007, the European Union and Morocco decided to set up an ad hoc working group to look into ways of strengthening relations between the two parties. This group produced detailed proposals that will be adopted by the Association Council.

In the political field the proposals include the establishment, on an ad hoc basis, of an EU-Morocco summit, ministerial-level concertation mechanisms, an invitation to Morocco to be present in the wings of certain EU Council ministerial or working group meetings (e.g. meetings of foreign or transport ministers, the Council's Maghreb-Mashrek and Africa groups), negotiation of a framework agreement for Morocco's participation in crisis-management operations, etc. In economic and other policy matters, the proposals are for harmonisation of laws and rules in a gradual process beginning with priority sectors. It is also proposed that trade relations be developed by means of a comprehensive and deeper free trade agreement covering new areas (public procurement, intellectual property rights, capital movements, competition, sustainable development, etc.).

The working group also recommended establishing closer relations between new stakeholders in the partnership between the EU and Morocco, in particular between the European Parliament and the Moroccan Chamber of Representatives, business associations, economic and social councils, and between Morocco and the Council of Europe.

The measures agreed by the two parties constitute an ambitious roadmap for the years to come and will need to be implemented by the various institutions identified.

For further information

http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/morocco/index_en.htm