

**Speech of Ms. Amina Bouayach, Chairperson of the National human Rights Council
of the Kingdom of Morocco**

Rabat World Human Rights Pre-Forum

February 17, 2023

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen

Dear friends

First of all, allow me, on behalf of the National Human Rights Council of the Kingdom of Morocco and the International Center for the Promotion of Human Rights of the Republic of Argentina, to welcome you to the World Human Rights Pre-forum which is being held for 2 days in Rabat, as a prelude to the World Forum on Human Rights in Buenos Aires next March. I hope that during your visit, you will have the opportunity to visit our beautiful capital, listed as a UNESCO World Heritage and known worldwide as the City of Lights.

Today, we welcome many participants from different countries and different horizons. Our meeting- a gathering of hearts and minds- serves as a retreat for human rights defenders to renew their commitment to our shared values in light of the rapid mutations the world is going through.

Let me begin by saluting, on behalf of all of you here present, the actions and commitment of human rights defenders from Africa, from Latin America and elsewhere.

A permanent monitoring is necessary to examine the challenges ahead, define priorities and implement strategies, drawing from the universal in order to advance the local.

I would like to thank the organizing teams for their professionalism and diligence, and am delighted with the fluidity of our exchanges. Together, we have opted for three themes of discussion during this pre-forum: namely transitional justice and memory, migration, and climate change, all on which Morocco possesses a solid and unique experience.

Today, I will not comment on the Transitional Justice process of each country, including my own, nor will I delve into the importance of Memory for the National Human Rights Council of Morocco, which established, two years ago, a Unit for Memory preservation and History promotion as part of the implementation of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission (IER) recommendations. The Unit aims to better understand the consequences and dynamics, still felt today, of the past of grave and serious violations of human rights; be they economic, political, social, or cultural.

The issue of Memory is a heavy one because it is not easily expressed or quantified. It is highly symbolic for entire nations and extremely complex and therefore, delicate to apprehend. I hope that the discussions during this pre-forum will help enlighten us, each one of you drawing on their own experience.

I have no doubt that the debates on migration and climate change will be rich in content and comprehensive, given the interdependence of these two hot issues in Africa and Latin America.

I think it timely to discuss these two major human rights challenges here in Rabat, with all of you here, especially because the so-called “emerging” countries have much to add to this debate, as shown by the contributions during the preparation of the Global Compact on Migration, or its adoption in Marrakech.

It is worrying to note that no “Western” country has ratified the international convention on the protection of rights of migrant workers and members of their families, while our countries voluntarily undergo universal examination and evaluation, as if a certain skin color or a certain religious belief dictated human dignity or predisposed one to some innate injustice.

On behalf of the working group on migration of the African network of NHRIs, currently chaired by the CNDH, allow me to assure you of the sustained rhythm of our shared actions to protect migrants and their families in their right to mobility.

Finally, I would like to say some words on the reasons bringing us all here: despite the distance, the difference in language and culture, we have a common and shared history. Firstly, we share the status of former colonies, with all the economic, political and social repercussions of this painful period.

Furthermore, our trajectories meet in terms of consolidating the rule of law. Many of the “emerging democracies”, as called by some, share a similar dynamic: a heavy past of serious human rights violations, a unique experience of transitional justice, a remarkable contribution to international case law in terms of reparation and guarantees of non-repetition, and an unmatched dynamic of their civil society.

It is difficult to measure the success of each one of these trajectories or what remains to be done. In Morocco, as in many other countries, we are, in my humble opinion, in the phase of implementing the horizontal accountability Guillermo O'Donnell wrote about so much.

Indeed, after a first phase of building a general framework and implementing base procedures - free and fair elections, a democratic constitution, an independent judiciary - we are in the phase of institutional construction into an efficient network of agencies that can assess, warn and intervene when citizens' fundamental rights are being, or are at risk of being, infringed upon; initiating a new age of reforms aimed at making the State a better defender of the rights, freedoms and interests of its citizens, especially those most vulnerable: the disadvantaged, women, children, migrants and refugees.

This is why the CNDH is extremely attentive to the issue of the effectiveness of rights health, education and accessibility. The CNDH also pays particular attention to issues relating to the rights of women and children. His Majesty the King's decision to reform the Family Code, for the second time in less than 20 years, constitutes for the CNDH a substantial step forward. Indeed, the CNDH is tirelessly working on these extremely complex issues rooted in society' traditions.

Let me insist upon the fact that the CNDH will spare no pain in order to accompany the reform, already begun, of the Judiciary, in its efforts toward the full protection, redress

and recourse for all citizens on an equal footing, in particular for children and women, **no** matter the exogenous pressures exerted on Morocco. The projects on reform the Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code must be part of that same logic.

Dear friends, I would like to close by saying that belonging to the countries of the South is a source of pride for all of us defenders of human rights, because when faced with the toughest challenges, with the hardest obstacles, we overcame them and succeeded in going forward.

We have made this path and must therefore protect the memory of these victories all the while remaining aware of the challenges awaiting us. Our contribution to the design and development of universal norms and values is not a passing incident; it is undeniably an action of building new paths, our path, towards the rule of law. At a time when some of so-called traditional democracies are using human rights as weapons in obtuse political games, betraying their very essence, we have chosen to have a dialogue, during this conclave endowed with high moral symbolism.

The work of a human rights defender is never finished. It is not a mere job or office. It is a calling, a life ethos and a destiny. We are not here only out of conviction or belief in the universality of human rights, but out of duty towards our brothers and sisters around the world, and out of faith in our fellow citizens.

Let us unite our voices, from Rabat to Buenos-Aires and beyond, into a single voice. That of no discrimination, dignity and justice