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## **STRONG FRIENDSHIP DESPITE GREAT DISTANCE: UKRAINE AND MOROCCO**

The Kingdom of Morocco was among the first states in the Arab world to recognize the independence of Ukraine on 30 December, 1991. The Protocol on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the Kingdom of Morocco and Ukraine was signed in New York, on 22 June, 1992. The Moroccan Embassy in Kyiv was opened in July 2000 and the Ukrainian Embassy in Rabat started its activities in October of the same year.

Since the establishment of the diplomatic relations, solid friendly relations based on respect, trust and mutual understanding, were forged between the Kingdom of Morocco and Ukraine. In 2017, the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the two countries was commemorated.

To enhance the beneficial cooperation and further develop it for the betterment of the two friendly peoples, high-ranking officials of both countries held numerous meetings and high-level visits.

It is gratifying that the interstate cooperation is built on a solid foundation that has been steadily expanding, encompassing a wide variety of areas of common interest.

In that context, steps were taken towards strengthening the economic cooperation, expanding the legal framework and increasing the people-to-people contacts between Morocco and Ukraine.

To give a strong impetus to their bilateral cooperation, the two countries have encouraged at the political level the creation of parliamentary friendship groups in their respective Parliaments.

At the civil society level, the Friendship Association between Ukraine and Morocco was launched in Kyiv in 2017 upon the initiative of our diplomatic mission.

The legal framework governing the relations between the two countries includes a wide range of agreements covering many important fields of cooperation.

They are many investment opportunities in Morocco in the industry, solar energy, information and communication technologies, tourism, agriculture, fishing industry, logistics and retail.

Foreign investors choose Morocco for its privileged geographical location, cost competitiveness, strong and stable macroeconomic performances, free trade access to one billion consumers around the world, world-class infrastructure, qualified labour force, sectorial plans and constantly improving business climate, investment incentives, and investors protection.



Набережна річки Бу-Регрет і Касба в медіні Рабата, Марокко

Quay of the Bou Regreg River and Kasbah in medina of Rabat, Morocco

Morocco's Investment and Trade Agency (AMDIE) has been created by the Moroccan government to support and provide high quality services to leading international projects. It gives free professional assistance to all investors and, with its professional team, offers them a wide range of services on setting up a business in Morocco.

There is a real interest from the Moroccan side in developing trade and investment relations with Ukraine. In April 2018, the Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Ukraine and of the Southern Moroccan city of Agadir signed a Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in various fields such as tourism, investment, local products (*produits du terroir*), agricultural machinery, water management, renewable energies, mining and handicrafts.

Last year, two other Moroccan economic delegations representing the Chamber of Agriculture of the Casablanca-Settat Region and the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Services of the Fez-Meknes Region visited Ukraine and had fruitful meetings with Ukrainian counterparts.

The field of people-to-people contacts and exchanges is very important and both countries are taking steps to increase them. In recent years, tens of thousands of Ukrainian tourist have visited Morocco. There is a strong desire from both sides to make their bilateral cooperation in the tourism sector more dynamic through the introduction of direct flights between the two countries. In this regard, a draft agreement on air services is currently under study by the competent authorities of the two countries.



Площа Джамаа-ель-Фна – найбільша площа в місті Марракеш, Марокко, одна з головних визначних пам'яток міста

Jemaa el-Fnaa Square, the largest square in the city of Marrakesh, Morocco, and one of the main attractions of the city

The Moroccan National Tourist Board takes part in Ukraine International Travel and Tourism Exhibition every year.

The Embassy took part and organised many cultural events with the aim of promoting the Moroccan culture in Ukraine, and to give to the Ukrainian people an opportunity to get acquainted with the Moroccan civilisation, culture, traditions, national costumes and handicraft, culinary art and way of life.

The Kingdom of Morocco and Ukraine share numerous similarities. Both countries are not only resolved to carve out a distinguished place for themselves in the international arena and committed to implement substantial reforms in order to create a proper environment for a prosperous economy, but share also other similarities since they have historically witnessed a succession of several civilizations that bequeathed them a tremendous cultural diversity. This ancestral heritage deeply rooted in history is illustrated by both Moroccan and Ukrainian ethnic diversity, traditions, clothing, music etc.

It is a pleasure for Moroccans to discover Ukraine through its wonderful people, charming culture, fancy way of life, the endless beauty of Ukrainian landscapes and the cities' magnificent architecture. However, above all what is exceptional about Ukraine is the kindness of the Ukrainian people.