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ONE ROAD ONE BELT AND CHINA-MOROCCO RELATIONS

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Inaugurated by the Chinese President Xi JINPING in 2013, the initiative of the New Silk Roads is based on three key principles: sharing, dialogue and synergy. It is a question of harmonizing the commercial policies of the States in order to deliver to the community of peoples.

This initiative aims at strengthening trade flows and improve connectivity between China and Africa, Europe, Middle East as well as South Asia and Southeast. It is presented as a revival of the historic Silk Road, a cluster of open transcontinental trade routes by China, towards 138 before J.-C, which connected the Middle Empire to the shores of the Mediterranean.

As designed, "the One Belt, One Road" Initiative is a global project which is a globalized version of the Silk Road. This initiative is expected to bring together more than sixty countries on three continents, representing approximately 63% of the world's population and 30% of the world's economic production by 2025.

The New Silk Roads represent a multi-dimensional planetary project, whose aim is to offer a new impetus to globalization and strengthen multilateralism. Through this initiative, China also wishes to share the gains of its experience and make it beneficial to developing countries, mainly African ones.

Morocco, Afro-Mediterranean pivot of the New Silk Road

The Chinese approach is perfectly combined with the Royal Vision of the autonomous development of Africa, it is a model based on cooperation that is beneficial to all parties. In fact, Morocco's cooperation with African counterparts has always relied on the pursuit of common interest and not on hegemony or leadership.

In the same context, the continent's development needs are at the heart of the Kingdom of Morocco's concerns and, in particular, the issue of electrification, to which China can provide innovative and efficient solutions.

A decisive step in relations between Morocco and China was reached in May 2016, during the visit of His Majesty King Mohammed VI in China. On this occasion, the two countries concluded a strategic partnership, including some fifteen agreements in numerous fields (economy, finance, industry, culture, energy, infrastructures ...).

Today, in the light of the New Silk Roads and the changes that affect the world, the relationship between Morocco and China is at a historic turning point. In a world in reconstruction, the two partners must redefine their role and the modalities of their cooperation in order to go along with the transformations of the international system. Thus, the initiative of the New Silk Roads is a historic opportunity, a consensual and participative vision of international relations, that Morocco is determined to contribute to its realization.

Eventually, the future of the Sino-Moroccan political relationship is announced under the best omens, with a strong strategic convergence, vision and shared goals. Oriented to the future, the cooperation between the two countries should promote a growing integration between their economies, their peoples and their cultures. It should involve all actors and, in particular, think tanks that can play a key role in strategic convergence and scientific cooperation.

China is fully aware of the importance of extending its horizon and to develop its cooperation, not only with the States, but also with the regions of the world which share the same concern in terms of political, economic and cultural fallout of globalization. In this context, its involvement in South-South cooperation comes under the reasoning, that Africa and the Arab world are essential partners. Accordingly, there is the role that Morocco could play because of its African, Mediterranean and Arab characteristics.

The future of Africa at the heart of the Sino-Moroccan dialogue

The strategic partnership with the Kingdom is seen as a precondition and a guarantee of the success of tripartite cooperation in Africa.

Historical champion of the African cause, pivot of tripartite relations China-Morocco-Africa, China-Morocco-Europe and China-Morocco-North America and benefiting from a strategic geographical position, modern infrastructures, an opening on the world and free trade agreements with the three continents, Morocco has undeniable assets which, without any doubt, can contribute to the success of the New Silk Roads initiative and bring a crucial contribution to the autonomous development of Africa.

The conditions for success of the Road and Silk Initiative

The rollout of the New Silk Roads Initiative is expected to face challenges of various categories, including:

- **Geopolitics:** The New Silk Roads should face the European and American reluctance that fears a powerful hegemonic rise in China. The deployment of this initiative coincides, moreover, with the exacerbation of tensions in the South China Sea and the deterioration of relations between the United States and Russia.
- **security:** security threats have intensified along the trace of the New Silk Roads. Whether in Africa, Middle East, Central Asia, South Asia, South-East Asia or other regions that are part of the initiative, terrorism and political instability could threaten the six land corridors.
- **financial:** the realization of the New Silk Roads requires huge funding. China has so far pledged 1,000 to 1,400 billion dollars to finance the realization of the initiative, but the plausible total amount of investments deemed necessary by 2049 is estimated as twice China's annual GDP.

To this end, it is necessary to look for ways to reduce development imbalances between the different regions and China. It is also important to extend cooperation, beyond state frameworks, to all actors. In addition, it is essential to rethink the relationship between security and development. The troubles that many Arab and African states are going through today are proof that security cannot be achieved without development and that the reduction of poverty is a prerequisite for political stability. This is a fundamental principle of the New Silk Roads project, which reflects the vision that has always been advocated the Kingdom of Morocco.

Finally, to be favorable to all partners, tripartite cooperation must be achieved by respecting three conditions: improving self-understanding and the understanding of the other, disseminating the right messages and identifying strategic actions so that cooperation takes place at the lowest economic and political cost.