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Study Visit of the Delegation of the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development (FAPPD)

Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco

September 23-24, 2024

Day One: September 23, 2024

First: Visit to the Economic, Social, and Environmental Council

The members of the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development visited the Moroccan Economic, Social, and Environmental Council, where they were warmly welcomed by the President of the Council, Mr. Ahmed Reda Chami. The President expressed his gratitude and appreciation to the Forum for this initiative and the visit by its members to the Council. He provided an overview of the Council, noting that it is an independent constitutional institution established by His Majesty King Mohammed VI on February 21, 2011. The Council is tasked with advisory roles concerning major developmental choices and public policies in the fields of economic and social issues, sustainable development, and advanced regionalization. The President emphasized the importance of this visit, especially at a time when the Council is focused on implementing the directives of His Majesty the King regarding water stress management and climate change. He informed the parliamentary delegation about the steps taken by the Council in this regard, such as accelerating dam construction, creating water channels, developing seawater desalination plants, implementing a program for the reuse of treated wastewater, and raising citizen awareness about the necessity of water conservation.

During his meeting with the members of the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development, Mr. Ahmed Reda Chami announced that the guiding plans for the integrated management of water resources for 2050 have been approved as part of comprehensive management at the regional level. This will enable alignment between needs and water resources at the decentralized level.

He also highlighted the increasing degradation of natural resources in Morocco, such as water and quarries, due to overexploitation and illegal practices. This situation necessitates

strengthening the current system and ensuring strict implementation of the legal framework governing licensing and oversight mechanisms.

In turn, the parliamentary delegation members emphasized the importance of partnership and networking between the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development and the relevant Arab institutions and entities concerned with population and development in Arab countries. They aim to unify efforts to create a better future for upcoming generations. The Forum collaborates with all parliamentary committees in Arab councils to discuss many important issues related to population and development, such as water, climate change, food security, youth, unemployment, women, reproductive health, and other matters. The Forum, in cooperation with the Asian Population and Development Association in Japan and with support from the Japanese government, organizes workshops and meetings that bring together parliamentarians and experts to discuss key population issues and their implications for legislation and laws that fall under the responsibilities of parliamentarians in their councils. The Forum has achieved significant accomplishments in this area. Dr. Mohammed Al-Samadi, Secretary General of the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development, mentioned that this study visit is the first of its kind to be implemented as part of the Forum's work plan. This visit comes at an opportune time to address an important topic being discussed by the Moroccan Economic, Social, and Environmental Council, which is water stress and climate change. He noted that the Forum, along with the Asian Population and Development Association, with appreciated support from the respected Japanese government and the United Nations Population Fund, will hold a regional Arab-Asian parliamentary meeting on population and development in Dubai to discuss climate change and sustainable development goals. He also expressed gratitude to the President of the Moroccan Economic, Social, and Environmental Council for providing them with this opportunity to visit the Council and learn about its significant achievements in this field.

At the end of the meeting, the delegation of the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development presented a plaque to the President of the Moroccan Economic, Social, and Environmental Council as a token of gratitude and appreciation for his outstanding efforts in supporting population and development issues in the Kingdom of Morocco.

Second: Visit to the Ministry of Youth, Culture, and Communication - National Rally Team for Moroccan Youth

During an official reception for the delegation of the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development at the Ministry of Youth, Culture, and Communication, the Secretary General of the Youth Sector praised the importance of this visit in building bridges of cooperation among entities that support and care for Arab youth issues. He noted that Morocco has established the "Moroccan Youth Award," an initiative launched by the Youth

Sector to create a creative competition among all youth categories and to honor and encourage outstanding talents in the Kingdom. The award covers five main areas:

- Scientific Research
- Technological Innovation
- Artistic and Cultural Creativity
- Volunteer Work
- Self-Employment

He highlighted the importance of these youth-focused areas, stressing the need to enhance collaboration between the Ministry and the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development, as well as the expertise the Forum brings. He called for moving forward toward multi-disciplinary partnerships, including other key programs such as "summer camps" and the youth volunteer program. By focusing on the youth, he noted, it represents a true investment in both the present and the future, fostering strong fraternal relations between nations.

In their speeches, the members of the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development delegation expressed their deep gratitude and appreciation for the warm reception they received. They emphasized the importance of such partnerships and cooperation in strengthening bilateral relations between youth, the Forum, and the Youth Committee within the Forum. They expressed their desire to continue knowledge exchange and coordination with the Ministry to build a bright future for future generations. The delegation also highlighted that the Forum has organized numerous Arab-Asian parliamentary meetings, addressing youth-related topics and issues. Parliamentarians have played a crucial role in enacting laws and legislation that support youth in Arab countries.

Third: Visit to the National Human Rights Council

Ms. Amina Bouayach, President of the National Human Rights Council in Morocco, welcomed the delegation of the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development. She praised the importance of this visit in enhancing cooperation on human rights issues, especially with parliamentarians who play a key and active role in passing legislation and regulations that promote human rights in daily life. She noted that the National Human Rights Council is a pluralistic and independent national institution, established in March 2011, replacing the Advisory Council on Human Rights, which was founded in 1990.

The National Human Rights Council is responsible for addressing all issues related to the defense and protection of human rights and freedoms, ensuring their full exercise, promoting them, and safeguarding the dignity, rights, and freedoms of citizens, both individually and collectively. This is done with full commitment to respecting both national and universal

frameworks in this field. The Council is also tasked with providing advice, recommendations, and proposals to the government and parliament in the field of human rights. Upon request or on its own initiative, the Council expresses its positions by offering opinions, memoranda, reports, and studies related to laws, draft laws, or any matter within its area of expertise.

The independence of the National Human Rights Council is a fundamental guarantee for the effectiveness of its work and a necessary condition for a sound and effective partnership with institutions, including the parliament, government, judiciary, and civil society. The latter has been recognized by our Constitution as an indispensable actor in our political system. Additionally, universities play an important role in enriching discussions, fostering innovation, and exchanging ideas. We must also acknowledge our interaction with international organizations, with whom we share the same principles and international human rights standards.

Ms. Amina Bouayach urged the delegation of the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development to establish strong and ambitious strategies that ensure the effective participation of children and youth. This, she emphasized, is crucial for securing a dignified future for them through appropriate legislation and laws.

During the meeting, the parliamentary delegation highlighted the importance of this visit and its impact in generating the necessary momentum for the next phase. They expressed their commitment to achieving further progress in the areas of reform and democracy, building on the achievements in human rights within Arab parliamentary councils. This effort is seen as a step in the right direction to advance and modernize the human rights framework in the Arab world.

During the meeting, the parliamentary delegation also reviewed the importance of the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development and the positive role it plays in parliamentary committees concerned with population and development across Arab countries. They highlighted the Forum's relationship with the government, parliament, and civil society institutions, and explained its working mechanisms, such as issuing statements and recommendations during regional and international parliamentary meetings. The delegation also praised the reforms adopted by Morocco to strengthen its democratic journey and achieve sustainable development.

Fourth: Visit to the Federation of Moroccan Women

In the fourth stop of the visit, the delegation of the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development arrived at the Federation of Women's Rights Associations. The delegation was warmly welcomed by the President of the Federation and its members. The President began her speech by expressing her appreciation for the Arab parliamentary delegation's important visit to the Moroccan Women's Rights Association. She emphasized

that this visit is very significant for the Federation, as it provides an opportunity to engage in dialogue, exchange experiences and stories, and directly address the essential legal and legislative needs of Arab women across Arab countries.

The President of the Women's Rights Association introduced the parliamentary delegation to the Federation of Women's Rights Associations, which was established in 1993. She explained that the Federation focuses on strengthening women's capacities and ensuring the enjoyment of all basic rights while eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against women. The Federation also aims to change social relationships based on male dominance and to build relationships founded on equality between women and men, while respecting human rights. Additionally, it works to empower women to participate actively in society by engaging in the development and implementation of policies.

In addition to working closely with women, the Federation of Women's Rights Associations strives to influence national and international institutions to achieve full equality between women and men at all levels and to implement a gender approach. This is accomplished through activities organized by the Federation and its affiliated associations, with a focus on the following areas:

- Reviewing legislation and the legal framework to establish full equality between women and men.
- Combating violence against women and providing services for women in difficult situations.
- Training, raising awareness, and combating illiteracy.
- Representing women in decision-making positions.
- Encouraging income-generating activities for women.
- Advocating and pressing for the guarantee of women's fundamental rights.
- Promoting education on equality and citizenship.
- Improving the representation of women in the media and combating symbolic violence.
- Encouraging women's creativity and scientific research, particularly in areas related to women's issues.

The President of the Federation noted that "Morocco has voluntarily engaged in the human rights system and interacts with reports issued by international mechanisms. The country is making efforts to enhance its implementation of agreements. In international forums, we discuss the efforts being made, emphasizing that a progressive discourse must be reflected in internal practices, and that patchwork solutions should not be employed."

In turn, the Arab parliamentary delegation expressed their gratitude and appreciation to the President of the Federation of Moroccan Women and its members for the warm welcome.

They thanked her for the presentation on the establishment, history, working mechanisms, goals of the Federation, and the success stories it has achieved for women in Morocco.

The Arab parliamentary delegation emphasized that since its establishment, the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development has placed great importance on women's rights. The Forum has worked to engage with all Arab parliamentary councils to establish dedicated women's committees within these councils, a goal that has been successfully achieved. Additionally, the Forum established a Women's Affairs Committee, chaired by a woman who closely monitors all issues related to Arab women and their needs in terms of legislation and laws across Arab countries. The Forum, in collaboration with the Asian Population Association in Japan, has organized several regional meetings of Arab and Asian parliamentarians focused on women's issues, resulting in several recommendations in this regard.

Both parties agreed to strengthen the foundations of cooperation between the Federation of Moroccan Women's Rights and the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development. This collaboration aims to unify efforts to advance shared goals and initiatives in support of women's rights and development across the Arab region.

Day Two: September 24, 2024

First: Visit to the Moroccan House of Representatives

A delegation from the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development visited the Moroccan House of Representatives in Rabat as part of efforts to strengthen cooperation and coordination between the Forum and the Moroccan Parliament. The visit aimed to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and expertise in areas of supportive work that both the Forum and the Moroccan House of Representatives undertake, particularly regarding the legislative process.

At the beginning of the meeting, the Speaker of the Moroccan House of Representatives, Mr. Rachid Talbi Alami, warmly welcomed the delegation of the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development, praising the deep ties between the two institutions. He emphasized the significance of the visit, noting that it would undoubtedly contribute to enhancing coordination and cooperation between the Forum and the Moroccan Parliament.

For their part, the delegation stressed the need to enhance the coordination of positions between the Forum and the Moroccan House of Representatives within regional and international organizations. This cooperation aims to support Arab causes, particularly issues related to population and development.

The delegation also visited the Moroccan House of Councillors, where they met with its President and several officials. During the visit, they were introduced to the working mechanisms of the various sectors and departments within the Council.

Second: Visit to the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation at the Moroccan House of Representatives

The delegation of the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development met with the President and members of the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation at the Moroccan House of Representatives. During this joint meeting, members of the Forum praised the distinguished relationships between Arab parliamentary councils and the Forum, as well as the valuable support from the Japanese government and the United Nations Population Fund. They emphasized the need to enhance bilateral cooperation among parliamentarians in Arab countries through the Forum and with Asian parliamentarians, fostering a fruitful partnership between the two groups.

In response, the President of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Moroccan House of Representatives affirmed the Council's and the Committee's commitment to strengthening cooperation with the Forum and its members.

Third: Visit to the Ministry of Solidarity, Social Integration, and Family in Morocco

The Minister of Solidarity, Social Integration, and Family welcomed a high-level delegation from the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development. The delegation is visiting Morocco to exchange ideas and discuss ways to foster collaboration between official and civil institutions in the Kingdom and the Forum. This meeting aimed to explore joint efforts to enhance social development and address pressing issues related to population and community welfare.

In this context, the Minister highlighted the significant achievements Morocco has made in social protection, particularly in strengthening the resilience of families through the expansion of health coverage and direct social support for disadvantaged households. She presented the programs implemented under the ministry's "Bridge" strategy, aimed at supporting and enhancing social safety nets by improving social services for various vulnerable groups through the ministry's centers and social sector institutions. The Minister also discussed initiatives for the economic empowerment and integration of women and people with disabilities through numerous partnerships with various stakeholders, focusing on training, qualification, and support to facilitate access to the job market. This approach emphasizes capacity building and digitization as essential tools for targeting, coordination, and accelerating the implementation of programs.

For its part, the delegation of the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development affirmed the support of Arab parliamentarians for these important issues in the Arab countries. They outlined several key areas in their strategic plan for the coming years, including family support, assistance for people with disabilities, social solidarity, and health, among others. This comprehensive approach aims to address pressing social challenges and improve the quality of life for various vulnerable groups.

At the end of the meeting, the Forum presented a plaque as a token of appreciation and gratitude for this important visit.

At the end of the visit on September 24, 2024, both the Speaker of the Moroccan House of Representatives and the President of the Moroccan House of Councillors greeted the members of the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development. They expressed their appreciation for this important visit, which reflects the Forum's commitment and attention to population and development issues in the Arab world, reinforcing its role as the official umbrella for these matters within Arab parliamentary councils.

Members of the Delegation of the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development

- H.E. Dr. Abdelhadi Al-Qasabi – Leader of the Parliamentary Majority in the Egyptian House of Representatives, Chairman of the Social Solidarity and Family Committee in the Egyptian House of Representatives.
- MP Dr. Ezzeddine Al-Taeb – Assistant Speaker of the Tunisian People's Assembly.
- MP Engineer Fatima Mohammed – Member of the Bahraini House of Representatives, Chairwoman of the Women's Committee.
- Dr. Mohammed Al-Samadi – Secretary General of the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development.

Second: Visit Program

Date	Day	Activity / Visit Location
Sep 22, 2024	Sunday	The delegation arrives at Casablanca Airport and heads to the city of Rabat (One and a half hours by car)
Sep 23, 2024	Monday	Visit to the Economic, Social, and Environmental Council
		Visit to the National Rally Team / Youth
		Visit to the National Human Rights Council.
		Visit to the Federation of Moroccan Women
Sep 24, 2024	Tuesday	Visit to the Moroccan House of Representatives and meeting with the Speaker of the House, Mr. Rachid Talbi Alami
		Visit to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
		Visit to the Leader of the National Rally Team
Sep 25, 2024	Wednesday	Departure from Rabat to Casablanca Airport (One and a half hours by car)