PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY
AND COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST
WOMEN IN MOROCCO
OUTCOME AND PROSPECTS

Report of the Kingdom of Morocco
57th Session of the Commission
on the Status of Women

New York, USA
4-15 March 2013
Introduction

A new constitutional and political context

Morocco has sought over the last decade to speed up the pace of institutional and legal reforms and to improve the indicators of development and enhance its governance. These efforts have culminated in the adoption of a new Constitution in 2011, which lays down the framework and foundation for a new constitutional, political and societal contract to progress on the path of building a society based on the entrenchment and advancement of human rights.

New constitutional gains

The new constitutional gains offer a new foundation to further consolidate Morocco’s democratic process and its constant drive towards openness and interaction with its regional and international environment. Once again, it has managed to strike a balance between what is specific—national identity and its Islamic, Arab, Amazigh and African constituents—and the universal, that is humanity’s shared values including democracy and protection of human rights in all their manifestations. Morocco has also managed to launch a new generation of political, social and economic reforms, which has earned the country its distinctive sub-regional and regional status as a country that advances on the path of consolidating democracy in all its manifestations.

This unwavering reformist drive has been instrumental in reaching general national consensus on the provisions of the new Constitution, which are informed by the principles of human rights and the rule of law, including the obligation to promote women’s rights and providing all institutional and legislative guarantees to reach this end.

Indeed, the new Constitution stipulates that women shall enjoy the same
civil, economic, social and environmental rights on an equal footing with men. Its preamble lays stress on prohibiting and combating all forms of discrimination based on sex, colour, religious creed, culture, social or regional origin, language, disability or any other personal condition; it is a significant gain and a shared responsibility that squarely lies on our shoulders.

Its provisions also enshrine the principle of gender equality as a fundamental concept for building a civic State, predicated on:

- Equal rights, obligations, capabilities and opportunities;
- Recognising the value of contributions of women and men, whether in public or private realms;
- Considering the needs, constraints, interests and aspirations of both women and men in the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development policies and programmes;
- Recognising the exercise of full citizenship for both sexes.

The new Constitution also provides for the establishment of a structure for parity and combating all forms of discrimination. This structure will be responsible for assessing and monitoring public policies directed at gender equality in political, economic and social sectors.

**A strong government commitment**

For decades, Morocco’s human rights and developmental drive has been attended by special attention to women. Eloquent signals have always emanated from the country’s highest authority and successive governments, emphasising the need to give the issue of women its rightful place among the nation’s priorities.

For its part, the Moroccan government has placed addressing poverty, marginalisation, ignorance and illiteracy, besetting women in particular,
and achieving effective equality among all sections of Moroccan society at the top of its priorities. In fact, the government has reaffirmed in its programme and legislative plan the need to consolidate the rights gains that Moroccan women have struggled for throughout the last three decades.

Violence against women is one of the aspects that are most prejudicial to the rights and dignity of women and their capacity to positively contribute to sustainable development and society’s stability as a whole. Therefore, this matter has drawn special attention from the government and all members of civil society as it constitutes a key factor to achieving a democratic society that opposes all forms of violence against women. In this respect, the Moroccan government has taken, in collaboration with all stakeholders, a string of legal and regulative measures and other practical actions on the ground to check this scourge.

As part of its continued attention to the question of women, the government of Morocco has taken a number of measures under its 2012-2016 programme of action. They include:

- Encourage women to participate in political parties and civil society organisations;
- Ensuring the effective implementation of constitutional provisions on gender equality, and progressing towards parity;
- Advancing women and reducing their vulnerability by addressing such contributing factors as illiteracy, poverty, discrimination and violence;
- Promoting the culture of respect for the rights, liberties and dignity of women.
An open institutional environment

Morocco ranks among leading Arab and African countries that have effectively endeavoured, particularly over the last decade, to create an enabling legislative and institutional environment for building a participatory democracy where all stakeholders play their constructing roles.

To further consolidate this policy direction, key national development schemes, notably the National Human Development Initiative (INDH) launched by His Majesty the King in 2005, as well as major socially-oriented sectoral programmes have been planned and implemented according to a participatory approach that involves civil society members. As early as 2007, Morocco introduced a political and legal text that regulates the participatory relationship between the State and civil society. A circular issued by the Head of Government set the framework for this contractual interaction to streamline partnership processes and bring them in line with the requirements of good governance, rationalisation and transparency. The ultimate aim is to improve human development indicators which are assessed by all social forces and institutional role players in the country.

The Constitution has come to further underpin this participatory democracy. One of its articles lays stress on the participation of associations dedicated to matters of public interest and non-governmental organisations in the preparation, implementation and evaluation of decisions and bills in conjunction with elected institutions and public authorities. These active organisations are expected to participate in the establishment of various constitutional bodies, including those concerning women such as the Structure for Parity and combating all forms of discrimination, and the Advisory Council on Family and Children.
These constitutional gains have been entrenched inside the government’s institutions. Accordingly, the remit of several government departments has been extended to better conform to the spirit of partnership that involves all stakeholders in society. Thus, the mandate of the Ministry of Justice also covers liberties whereas the Ministry of Relations with Parliament is also responsible for regulating relations with civil society. All government departments have intensified efforts to strategically reach out to civil society under their respective action plans, particularly with respect to grants, institutional support and assistance with NGO projects.

**Constant openness and interaction**

The Kingdom of Morocco continues, as always, to seek constant and uninterrupted interaction between its accomplishments at home and their adaptation to international and regional norms and standards. In this regard, the Kingdom has engaged in a number of international and regional initiatives on women. Last February 2012, for instance, Morocco hosted the Working Group on discrimination against women in law and practice. In its report to the 20th Session of the Human Rights Council, held in June of the same year, the Session commended the political and legislative reforms conducted in Morocco and regarded some of them as good practices, especially provisions of the new Constitution that further buttress the status and rights of women. Moreover, the Kingdom tabled two reports in 2008 and 2012 as part of the Universal Periodic Review mechanism, which offered the opportunity to present the Kingdom’s efforts in the area of human rights in general and the promotion of women’s rights in particular. It was also an opportunity to identify shortcomings through the valuable recommendations Morocco received with respect to the process of ongoing reforms in this area.
The Kingdom has also ratified a multitude of international conventions and instruments that enshrine the principle of prohibiting gender-based discrimination. They include the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its Optional Protocol; amendment to article 20, paragraph 1 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its Optional Protocol; and adoption of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Other agreements with an impact on human rights were also ratified including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol (2009); Arab Convention No. 18 concerning the employment of minors (1996); Arab Convention No. 8 concerning Trade Union Freedoms and Rights (1977); and Convention No. 151 concerning Protection of the Right to Organize and Procedures for Determining Conditions of Employment in the Public Service etc …
ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY
Continuing legislative reforms and successive institutional strategies

Pursuant to the constitutional requirement of gender equality and even the pursuit of parity, the Kingdom of Morocco has strived to legally protect the rights of women and ensure their empowerment, not only politically but also socially and economically. Morocco’s reform process is punctuated by milestones that owe their maturation to the responsible manner in which society responded to their challenges. These milestones are quiet revolutions on the path of achieving gender justice, equity and equality. They may be summarised as follows:

Equality and legal recognition

One of the features characterising Morocco’s experience in legislative reform, which we wish to commend again, is the **Family Code**—a quiet revolution on the path of achieving gender equality, justice and equity in view of its content and the societal consultations that preceded its inception. The Code sets the legal minimum age for marriage at 18 for both men and women and places the family under the responsibility of both spouses. It also grants them equal rights and obligations, including the right to terminate marriage. A review is conducted every year to assess the implementation of the Code in a participatory manner between the Ministry of Solidarity, Women, Family and Children and the Ministry of Justice and Liberties in the presence of all stakeholders to identify obstacles and constraints.

For its part, the **Labour Code** of 2003 provides for the obligation to protect working women against all forms of discrimination and to provide them with legal protection. The Code stipulates that “sex,
marital status or family requirements may not be considered as fair grounds for disciplinary action or dismissal—a vivid embodiment of the equality principle. It also threatens tighter financial sanctions against any violation of women’s rights, and warns private employment agencies against any discrimination based on race, colour or sex ... that may undermine the principle of equal opportunity and equal treatment in employment…”

Moreover, an amendment to the Citizenship Act of 2007 allows a mother to pass on her citizenship to children born of a mixed marriage. The amendment thus grants an absolute form of equality between men and women in the transfer of Moroccan citizenship rights as an original nationality, with no restrictions or conditions.

Other examples include the Criminal Procedure Act, the Civil Status Act, the *kafala* of abandoned children, and the transitional justice process ect...

Besides the legal recognition of equality, the Kingdom of Morocco has endeavoured to develop the institutional capacity and mechanisms supporting legislative mechanisms. Sections dealing with cases of family, minors and persons lacking legal capacity have been opened inside courts of first instance across the country to monitor the implementation of the Family Code, identify legal and material difficulties, and work towards their resolution in accordance with law and jurisprudence.

A programme is being implemented to support the enforcement of the Family Code by facilitating women’s access to justice (2010-2013). The programme is part of the international project “Gender and Democratic Governance” which aims to enhance good governance and women’s access to judicial services in four countries including the Kingdom of Morocco.
Gender approach and equality

To support the afore-mentioned legislative reforms, Morocco designed in 2006 the National Strategy for Gender Equality—the culmination of a cooperation drive involving government departments, civil society organisations, international bodies, research groups, and political parties. The strategy seeks to include the gender perspective in sectoral action plans and programmes and development projects. This has led to the gradual mainstreaming of gender in the programmes of several government departments as evidenced by the implementation of medium-term sectoral action plans aimed at entrenching gender equality and equity. During the same year, Morocco prepared the National Charter for Improving the Portrayal of Women in the Media which aims to spread the culture of equality and fight stereotypes.

In 2005, Morocco integrated for the first time gender in the State’s General Budget. It then proceeded in the gradual activation of this reform taking into consideration the special needs of women and men in the preparation, implementation and evaluation of public policies. The ultimate aim is to achieve gender equity and enhance the efficiency of these policies through a better allocation of financial resources.

Since that year, the Department of Finance has regularly issued a gender report to accompany the State’s General Budget Bill, which provides observers with a mechanism for assessing public policies in the light of the varied needs of target populations. Last financial year, the Department produced a number of methodological guides on performance, including one on the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), another on performance monitoring, and a third manual on performance auditing and assessment. The Department was also able during the preparation of the Gender Budget Report 2012 to consolidate a new methodology that analyses public policies from a human rights perspective, with the participation of 27 government departments.
A Centre of Excellence on Gender-Responsive Budgeting in Morocco was set up in November 2012, in partnership with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women). The centre will be dedicated to innovation and research on gender-responsive budgeting through peer learning—as a culmination of the State’s budget reforms.

The national survey on time-use of women and men, conducted in 2012, provided a valuable mechanism to determine the contribution of either sex to social work and national wealth as well as ways and levels of assessing such contributions. Additionally, gender has been included in all surveys conducted by the High Commission for Planning (HCP) such as the National Household Living Standard Survey, the National Employment Survey, and the National Informal Sector Survey to be updated this year (2013). Moreover, HCP regularly issues a statistical leaflet titled “Women and Men in Figures” which provides a multitude of indicators related to gender.

The utilisation of the Municipal Information System, designed as a key local planning tool, is expected to make updated data available on the condition of women and indicators of their advancement, by providing information on their access to basic facilities and utilities including health, schooling, water and electricity.

Economic and social empowerment

Morocco has initiated a number of socioeconomic projects designed, among others, to empower women, such as the National Human Development Initiative as well as projects supporting social and solidarity-based economy intended for women.
An example is the Medical Aid Scheme (RAMED), a service that aims to expand healthcare coverage and ensure the right of access to healthcare services for all Moroccans, including women. Some 1,073,000 beneficiaries have so far received their RAMED cards whose distribution is part of a new health policy based on respect for human rights, notably the right to health.

To further support such empowerment, a Family Solidarity Fund was set up in 2003 that only came into operation in 2012. The fund was established under the 2011 Budget Act. A law was enacted to determine conditions of eligibility and set out the procedures to be followed to receive benefits. The law also defines ways of recovering allocated grants from the person required to make alimony payments after divorce. The running of the Fund has been entrusted to the Caisse de Dépôt et de Gestion (CDG). So far, some 562 women have already benefitted from the Fund though it only started operations in October 2012.

Moreover, Soulaliyates or female members of tribes with rights to collective lands have finally been granted the right to benefit, like their male counterparts, from the financial and in-kind proceeds accruing to their tribal groups from the property transactions conducted on some collective lands. In 2012, Soulaliyates were able to receive a total of MAD168,130,515.99 in compensation that concerned 23,358 rightful claimants although they obtained this status only in 2007. This development was possible thanks to a new drive based both on the equal treatment of all members of these tribal groups regardless of systems in place, and on transparency, equity and social justice.

Political and administrative empowerment

Regarding the political empowerment of women, the Kingdom of Morocco has taken a number of measures to bolster their political representation.
In 2002, a quota system was introduced by adopting a nationwide and an additional list of candidates, which increased the rate of women’s presence from 10% in 2007 up to 17% in 2011 in Parliament, and from 0.56% in 2003 up to 12% in 2009 inside municipalities.

The Kingdom has also adopted the gender approach in the running of local-government councils by setting up advisory commissions inside all local councils, known as the commissions on equality and equal opportunities, as provided by the Municipal Charter. The gender perspective is also considered while preparing municipal development plans. In this respect, a guide has been produced regarding the establishment and regulation of commissions on equality and equal opportunities.

An incentive system intended for political parties has also been put in place to expand women’s representation. A yearly MAD10 million support fund has been set up to promote their representation through capacity building in preparation for parliamentary and municipal elections. According to preliminary reports, the number of support projects implemented to build women’s capacity reached 119 by December 2012, amounting to MAD28.84 million. These projects had an impact on the rate of coverage of the additional electoral district in the latest parliamentary elections. Political parties were able to field women candidates in all electoral districts, contrary to pre-election fears, especially in rural areas, that women would not stand for election to local government councils.

In view of new constitutional provisions affirming the principle of progress towards parity and the adoption by the current government of mechanisms for its materialisation, the government has taken several legal steps to shore up women’s representation at the House
of Counsellors (the Upper House) and inside regional councils on the occasion of coming elections. The organic law concerning the House of Counsellors provides for introducing a legislative mechanism for alternation between men and women on lists of candidates submitted in the context of electoral colleges represented at the House. Another organic law on the election of members of local government councils also provides for creating two electoral districts in every prefecture, province or prefecture of districts, and reserving one of them to women. This electoral district will consist of no less than one-third of the total number of seats allocated to each prefecture, province or prefecture of districts in regional councils. The government also passed a law regarding senior appointments, urging the implementation of the principle of progress towards parity, which is set to reinforce women’s representation in government decision-making positions.

**Gender equality and progress towards parity**

Today, Morocco continues its untiring efforts to promote women’s full rights in response to the provisions of the new Constitution which provides for “banning and combating all forms of discrimination based on sex, colour, religion, culture, social or regional origin, language, disability or any other personal condition.” In this context, the new government has developed the Governmental Plan for Gender Equality towards Parity 2012-2016 (IKRAM). The Plan provides a framework for the convergence of initiatives taken to integrate women’s rights in public policies and development programmes in line with the current juncture’s requirements to add a regional and local dimension to these policies and programmes. This Government Plan is also conceived as an instrument to fulfil commitments made in the government’s programme for the period 2012-2016, without losing sight of the challenges arising from the democratic implementation of the new Constitution and the country’s commitment to achieve Millennium
Development Goals (MDGs).

The Plan, prepared with the involvement of all government departments, revolves around eight core areas:

1. Institutionalising and promoting the principles of equity and equality, and laying down the foundations of parity;

2. Combating all forms of discrimination against women;

3. Reforming the education and training system based on equity and equality;

4. Boosting equitable and equal access to healthcare services;

5. Developing basic infrastructure to improve the living conditions of women and girls;

6. Economic and social empowerment of women;

7. Ensuring equitable and equal access to government and political decision-making positions;

8. Achieving equal opportunity for men and women on the labour market.
COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Legislative initiatives and institutional strategies

Morocco has never dissociated itself from countries involved in the campaign against violence against women. On the contrary, it has engaged in this drive since the early 1970s by adopting a gradual approach to break the silence that used to surround this scourge and a participatory methodology including all stakeholders such as women’s NGOs as well as counselling and legal advice centres which have been the first to address the matter.

Combating violence: strategy and programmes

Accordingly, Morocco has developed a strategic framework that governs the interventions of stakeholders. Hence, a national strategy to combat violence against women was drawn up in 2002. A national plan designed to implement the strategy followed in 2004 following a broad-based consultation process. The latter was instrumental in reaching national consensus on the need to contain the scourge. It also helped to gradually develop inter-sectoral working approaches and to coordinate actions and initiatives based on evolving multipartite and multidimensional partnerships.

Morocco has also produced an integrated strategy for preventing and combating violence at school. A key outcome of this strategy was the opening of counselling and mediation centres as well as violence watch units inside schools. Another outcome was the establishment of an information, monitoring and evaluation system that deals with identified cases of violence. Other outcomes include integrating values of human rights and civics into school textbooks and programmes; expunging discriminatory or pro-violence stereotypes from these books; integrating values of civics and non-violence into the training programmes of educators; and reviewing methods of
teaching, assessment and examination to avert violence considering the effective role of these methods in producing an education that instils the principles of equality and non-violence.

The 2008-2011 Multi-Sectoral Programme for Combating Gender-Based Violence through the Empowerment of Women and Girls (TAMKIN) is pioneering experience in joint, multipartite programme development. Indeed, the programme unified initiatives from 13 government departments, 8 United Nations agencies present in Morocco, and more than 40 civil society organisations. This has contributed to raising the awareness of stakeholders on the difficulties inherent in convergence. The Rabita Mohammedia des Oulémas (Mohammadia League of Muslim Scholars) also designed a programme to combat gender-based violence—an instrument for putting religious values into practice in everyday life. The programme included a guide and a module for training religious scholars in mediation.

**Combating violence: protection and legislation**

The new Constitution stipulates that “the physical and moral integrity of a person may not be undermined under any circumstances by any person, private or public.” It also stipulates that “under no pretext whatever may a person treat another in a manner that is cruel, inhuman, degrading or offends dignity.” These constitutional provisions carry an obligation to legally protect women victims of violence and to educate society about rejecting and avoiding the practice of violence.

Accordingly and pursuant to the constitutional principle of ensuring the physical and moral integrity of individuals, the Kingdom of Morocco is today working to buttress legal protection for women by preparing a bill to combat violence against them. The legislation is due to be enacted as part of the legislative plan for 2013.
Earlier this year, an amendment was made to Criminal Law to abolish the second paragraph of Article 475, which allows rapists to marry their underage female victims. Action has also been taken to identify legislative shortcomings or inadequacies that hamper women’s full criminal law protection or prevent the criminalisation of new forms of violence or reporting thereof.

The Criminal Law had previously been reviewed to include provisions that effectively consolidate women’s criminal law protection as well as repress and combat violence against them. Morocco’s Criminal Law penalises all forms of violence perpetrated against women, including sexual assaults. For instance, physicians and their assistants have been released from the obligation of professional secrecy to report any case of violence against women or wives that may come to their knowledge in the discharge of their duties. Other examples include considering all offences committed by husbands against their spouses to be the same for purposes of establishing recidivism, and regarding any harm arising from a husband as an aggravating circumstance. The 2011 amendment to the Criminal Law included a section on the protection of victims, their families or property from any harm they may face after lodging a complaint.

The Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training is working on issuing a legal text on domestic workers with the provision of the necessary facilities for the labour inspection system at the level of material means as well as human resources in order to achieve adequate protection for working women. The Ministry also ensures the training of 500 labour inspectors in the field of fundamental rights at work including equality in employment and pay and fighting against sexual harassment of women workers.
Combating violence: care and follow-up

Besides criminal law protection to women victims of violence, the Kingdom of Morocco has sought to develop institutional capabilities and mechanisms in support of legislative amendments, which contribute to care provision to victims. A network for care services to women and child victims of violence backed with coordination mechanisms was set up in 2010. The network consists of local committees at tribunals of first instance as well as regional committees inside courts of appeal. All government departments concerned with addressing this phenomenon are involved in the network, including justice, health, national security and civic organisations, to coordinate different interventions and effort and unify views and practices.

Thus, the Department of Justice and Liberties has put in place an action plan to enhance care delivery to women and children. The plan also aims to facilitate access to the services of care units intended for these two categories and to build the capacity and mechanisms of action of such units. The document rests on the Guide to Standards for Care to Women and Children, which lays the foundation for a practical, clear, coordinated and holistic approach to providing judicial support to women and children. It also rests on the programme for short- and medium-term training and further training intended for members of care units, including judges, social workers, representatives of the Department of Health, the National Security Service, the Royal Gendarmerie, as well as educators at child care centres and representatives of NGOs working in this area.

Similarly, the Department of Health has implemented a training and capacity building programme intended for health professionals. It has also issued an initial circular to universalise the establishment of integrated care units for women and child victims of violence in all
hospitals. So far, 76 units have been opened and equipped at various hospitals across the country. In another circular, the Department instructs that women and child victims of violence be issued with medical certificates free of charge. Finally, the Department prepared a Guide to Standards for Care to Women and Child Victims of Violence.

The National Security Service and the Royal Gendarmerie corps have also been part of all efforts made to combat the scourge and to shatter stereotypes over the role of women in society. In this context, Morocco amended the National Security Staff Regulations to enable women to serve at all echelons of the police corps. Additionally, more than 119 crisis units for battered women have thus far been opened within judiciary police districts. Contact officers have also been designated inside police districts (392 officers) to expedite investigations, guarantee adequate protection to women victims of violence, and ensure efficiency in the conduct of probes and inquiries. To better deal with the victims, the psychological dimension has also not been overlooked in training programmes. Periodical sessions have been held to train judiciary police officers and agents serving on the ground in accordance with the Guide to Standards for Judicial Care to Women and Children.

Combating violence: financial and institutional support

Considering the role of women’s NGOs as well as counselling and legal advice centres in supporting women victims of violence, Morocco adopted as early as 2005 a participatory approach to providing financial and institutional assistance to these NGOs and centres.

In 2012, however, a new measure was introduced which consists in the publication of calls for tenders by various departments with respect to support directed at programmes and initiatives submitted by these
NGOs and centres according to the Standards Guide. This new policy sets out to promote the principles of transparency, good governance and equal opportunity among stakeholders and to equip these centres with the necessary resources to perform their mission in support of women victims of violence.

The Ministry of Solidarity, Women, Family and Social Development has launched this year (2013) a programme to reform and develop social centres, including temporary shelters for women victims of violence. The programme is an instrument designed to support all players, stakeholders and founding NGOs affiliated with social care institutions (375 support institutions in 2013) in conjunction with amendment to Act No. 14-05 governing the operation of these institutions.

**Combating violence: monitoring and follow-up**

Efforts exerted by Morocco since the mid-1990s have been instrumental in building up a significant academic knowledge base. Stakeholders have contributed to its development, including government departments, counselling and legal advice centres, universities and research institutes. This has provided stakeholders with the mechanisms, knowledge and manuals needed to regulate and organise the provision of care to victims of violence at all stages.

The culmination of these knowledge-building efforts was the conduct of the first **National Survey on Violence against Women** in Morocco in 2009. The survey sought to measure the prevalence of this violence in society, and identify its multiple forms and places of occurrence. The survey also set out to determine the characteristics of battered women and perpetrators of violence, and to measure how often cases of violence are reported to the competent services. The survey will be updated next year (2014) to assess progress made in containing violence. Other research will also be carried out to look at this phenomenon from an analytic perspective.
In 2012, the Ministry of Solidarity, Women, Family and Social Development completed a field study on “Involving Men and Boys in Combating Violence against Women.” The study is a first step towards the preparation of an integrated action plan to involve men and boys in combating the scourge.

Considering the importance of emergency intervention in cases of violence against women, the Ministry is in the process of establishing a National Observatory for Combating Violence against Women as well as regional observatories for reporting cases of violence and discrimination targeting women and girls. The work of these mechanisms will rest on an information system on violence against women, which was implemented to centralise data and statistics received from government departments before their analysis and publication as part of annual reports.

The media also plays an essential role in forging a collective consciousness that respects human rights and condemns any act of violence that violates these rights. Accordingly, Morocco is busy working on the creation of a national observatory to improve women’s image in the media, which will come to light in the course of this year. Morocco is also striving to include gender perspective in the specifications applicable to the public media cluster.

**Combating Violence: awareness and accountability**

Guided by the belief that the successful containment of violence against women depends on awareness of stakeholders about their responsibilities in this battle, Morocco has sought to entrench a societal culture based on human values, civics, equality, justice and equity as a key pillar of its action against this heinous phenomenon that runs counter to human rights. To reach this end, Morocco has made use of all agents of socialisation.
As early as 1998, the country adopted media-based sensitisation campaigns as an instrument of containing violence against women by raising society’s awareness about the risks involved and calling for the rejection and condemnation of its perpetrators.

This drive took on a local and direct approach with the launch of the tenth edition of the national campaign for combating violence against women in December 2012. “No more women’s suffering, stop the violence” was the theme of the campaign which extended across the Kingdom’s sixteen regions. As part of the campaign, some 200 conferences, roundtables, and open communication meetings were convened to discuss all issues related to violence against women and measures taken by the government to address them. The campaign also highlighted the role of civil society in raising awareness on the danger of this scourge and that of citizens in its containment. During the campaign, testimonies and accounts were heard from women who suffered cases of violence.

The tenth edition of the campaign saw the participation of more than 800 stakeholders involved in combating violence against women, representing government departments, civil society, elected bodies, local authorities, universities, research centres, and the media.

The campaign also attracted large attendance, reaching a total of 30,000 attendees. Communication and study meetings have also been held as they afford all players an opportunity to deliberate on the scourge and look at its multiple dimensions and dangerous social, economic and cultural implications for society. Recommendations are also made on ways of addressing violence against women, which hangs on upholding their rights and promoting their role in society, as well as nurturing a culture based on the principles of gender equity and equality.
In this context, a regional conference on preventing and combating violence against women was held in September 2012, in cooperation with the Council of Europe. The event saw the participation of a large number of government officials and international experts from both sides of the Mediterranean. The participants shared their experiences and exchanged knowledge and expertise in the prevention and eradication of violence against women. They also discussed how such experiences and expertise may be used to foster good governance and to monitor and assess the scourge. Other items on the agenda included developing and institutionalising joint watch and intervention mechanisms, and strengthening Euro-Mediterranean partnership in combating violence against women.

Additionally, a study day was organised last December in partnership with UN Women to assess national accomplishments in addressing violence against women. “Combating Violence against Women: Assessing a Process in Anticipation of a New Strategic Vision” was the theme of the meeting which was, definitely, a new milestone in assessing progress in strategic planning, service delivery to women victims of violence, and programmes launched for purposes of prevention and sensitisation. The meeting featured three theme-based workshops during which all relevant government departments laid out their respective achievements in the area before engaging in assessment debates with NGOs and experts working in the same field.

The year 2013 in Morocco will be a year of continued mobilisation around the risks involved in the scourge of violence against women.
Summary

As the Kingdom of Morocco enters a new phase marked by the institutionalisation of gender equality in its recently adopted Constitution in pursuit of parity and the eradication of all forms of discrimination against women, it nurtures the ambition to maintain its distinctive reputation for crafting a unique experience in the Arab world and, more generally, in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). This distinctive experience originates from an unprecedented legislative and rights context and from the consultation process and societal drive that attended and interacted with the issues at hand.

These new women’s gains are the outcome of an open social debate that made of gender equality and combating all forms of discrimination a guiding premise for building balanced social relations. Informed by a philosophy that rests on equal rights and obligations for both men and women, they have come to consolidate what has been accomplished after years of joint efforts. For many years, Morocco initiated a series of bold political reforms which today enable the country to respond to all aspirations and expectations of Moroccan society.

However and despite the extent of legislative and constitutional accomplishments made following efforts by all stakeholders—including government, political parties and civil society, they will have no tangible impact on the daily reality of citizens without the strong will of all these players and without a nationwide commitment from all sides to further strengthen them and ensure their implementation in a spirit of shared responsibility. This takes on special significance with the enforcement of the provisions of the new Constitution which, in addition to the great potential it holds, poses the challenge of rising to the occasion.