



ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA
Office for North Africa

Forum on Development in North Africa
Trade for Growth and Job Creation

Marrakesh, Kingdom of Morocco, 19-20 February 2007

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Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa opened the Forum on Development in North Africa that took place in Marrakesh, Morocco on 19-20 February 2007. The theme of the Forum which was the culmination of a series of events organized by SRO-NA in 2006 was Trade for Growth and Job Creation.

The Forum which objective was to define a plan of action for North Africa in order to trigger a virtuous cycle of trade, economic growth and employment gathered about 300 participants representing decision-making organs, the private sector and many elements of the civil society from the seven member States (Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Sudan and Egypt) as well as their trade partners from Africa and other regions of the world.

Market places and bilateral meetings created an opportunity for many participants to meet their counterparts from the other countries of the region and explore means of initiating new opportunities of increased trade between the North African countries.

The Forum also provided an opportunity for establishing four focal groups representing women entrepreneurs, young decision-makers, actors in the financial sector and in the area of information and communication technology.

During the Session which was dedicated for the ministerial dialogue, focal groups presented actions they intended to take to boost intra-regional trade. They also posed some questions to the Ministers participating in the Forum. The Ministers took advantage of this opportunity to explain means put in place by their respective governments to give fresh impetus to trade between North African countries from a perspective of sustained economic growth and support of fast-growing sectors that create job opportunities.

The Forum was closed by reading out Marrakesh Declaration that resumes the recommendations and actions agreed upon by all the stakeholders in order to respond to employment challenges in North Africa through the revitalization of intra-regional trade. The Declaration was presented to the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts of the SRO-NA at its meeting held on 21 February 2007 in Marrakesh, Morocco. The Committee agreed to transmit the Declaration to the Conference of the ECA Council of Ministers scheduled to take place from 29 March to 4 April 2007 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

In the margins of the Forum, Mr. Janneh had the opportunity to hold discussions with:

- Mr. Habib Ben Yahia, Secretary-General of the Arab Maghreb Union;
- Mr. Salman Sulyman El-Safi, State Minister for Foreign Trade, Sudan ;
- Mr. Abderrahmane Ba, Minister of Trade, Craft Industry and Tourism, Mauritania;
- Mr. Mustapha Mechahouri, Minister of Foreign Trade, Morocco ;
- Mr. Hassan Abouyoub, Roving Ambassador, Morocco ;
- Mr. Slaheddine Makhoulouf, State Secretary at the Office of the Minister of Trade, Industry and Craft Industry, Tunisia ;
- Mr. Hedi Djilani, Chairman of the Tunisian Union of Industry, Commerce and Craft Industry and President of the newly formed Maghreb Employers' Union which was established in Marrakesh the last day prior to the opening of the Forum.

Mr. Janneh met with the mass media representatives who attended the Forum and reviewed with them the challenges facing the development of the African continent and the efforts made by the ECA to support member States and Regional Economic Communities in the implementation of their socio-economic policies.