

**Virtual Meeting of the Executive Bureau of the Parliamentary Network
for Food Security & Nutrition in Africa and the Arab World, June 17,
2020**

Press Release

H.E Abdul Hakeem Bin Chamach, Speaker of the House of Councilors of Morocco, chaired the meeting of the Executive Bureau of the Parliamentary Network for Food Security and Nutrition in Africa and the Arab World to deliberate upon the topic: “The impact of the COVID -19 pandemic on food security in the African and Arab regions”. The meeting took place on Wednesday 17 June 2020 via Video Conference, with the participation of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

At the beginning of the meeting, the Speaker of the House of Councilors affirmed that the holding of this event is aimed at achieving the goals of the Parliamentary Network for Food Security in Africa and the Arab World, including promoting the exchange of information and experiences; boosting discussion, dialogue and consultation on strategic issues related to food security and nutrition in the two regions; activating and strengthening the role of parliamentarians in exploring ways for boosting joint parliamentary action to confront the growing socio-economic challenges facing Arab and African countries, and the international community as a whole due to COVID19 pandemic.

He stressed that Parliamentary networks for food security are called upon to raise the level of vigilance, monitoring, and mobilization , in addition to offering solutions and initiatives to address the health, social and economic repercussions of this pandemic, especially those related to food security issues.

Bin Chamach also reviewed the recent indicators and developments pertaining to the spread of the Coronavirus in the Kingdom of Morocco, highlighting the integrated and proactive strategy adopted by Morocco upon direct instructions from His Majesty King Mohammed VI, may God

bless him, in the face of the outbreak of the Coronavirus epidemic and its repercussions. He stated that such strategy proved effective in terms of reducing the health, social and economic consequences of the epidemic.

Moreover, Mr. Bin Chamach recalled the fundamentally significant decision creating a “Special Fund for managing and confronting Coronavirus Epidemic”, in accordance with the instructions of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, may God bless him, who called for providing conducive conditions for financing preventive measures to confront the coronavirus and limit its effects under various national programs, including the Green Morocco Plan and the Agricultural Development Fund, which helped Morocco to acquire strong immunity against the epidemic, thus enabling the country to meet national needs and ensure a great deal of its national food security.

Mr. Bin Shamash further highlighted the royal initiative presented by His Majesty King Mohammed VI, may God bless him, which was aimed at establishing a practical framework to enable African countries to cope with the different stages of confronting the Corona epidemic, including by allowing the exchange of experiences and best practices to address the health, economic and social impacts resulting from the pandemic. He expressed his deep appreciation to and pride in His Majesty's initiative to provide medical assistance to the brotherly African countries to help their efforts to combat the pandemic of Covid 19, which reflects the King's philosophy and his firm commitment to the solidarity approach towards the sisterly African countries.

For his part, Ayman Omar, Senior Coordinator of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) programs, gave a detailed presentation on the repercussions of the Covid 19 pandemic on food security in the African and Arab regions, reviewing the measures, and the Guidance Notes and Recommendations issued by FAO to address the negative impacts of this pandemic on the health and socio-economic levels, particularly with regard to food security and nutrition issues.

He also presented a set of proposals related to the work of parliamentary networks in light of current circumstances , in addition to some work guidelines that are included in the final recommendations of the meeting.

For their part, members of the Executive Bureau of the Parliamentary Network for Food Security in Africa and the Arab world hailed the initiative to hold this significant meeting , confirming that parliamentarians are essential partners in policies related to fighting poverty, hunger and malnutrition; in addition to the fact that they carry out legislative and oversight roles and tasks with regard to achieving the sustainable development goals- especially in light of the emerging challenges posed by Coronavirus epidemic to food security in the African and Arab regions and the world as a whole.

The participants also reviewed their national experiences in facing this epidemic , with Dr. Jihad Al-Fadil, chairwomen of the services committee at the Shoora Council of the Kingdom of Bahrain, deputy chairperson of the network, highlighting the range of legislative initiatives, programs and proactive strategies undertaken by the Kingdom of Bahrain government and legislative institutions under the insightful and rational leadership of the country's King Hamad Bin Issa Al- Khalifah, which are linked to various food industries and modern, environmental agricultural programs that have made Bahrain one of the most secure countries in the region, in terms of domestic food supply, and proved effective in dealing with the repercussions of the pandemic .

For his part, Dr. Bashir Al-Hosh, member of the High Council of the State of Libya, the network's rapporteur, stressed that the situation in Libya was more complicated and difficult due to the Coronavirus pandemic as well as the armed conflict in the country. In this regard , he affirmed that Libya today does not need more initiatives or appeals to resolve the crisis, considering that the Skhirat Agreement is a comprehensive one that includes all elements of the national political solution meant to build a civil state that accommodates all sections and components of the Libyan

people. He called for holding another meeting in Skhirat to form a national unity government , extending his gratitude and appreciation to His Majesty King Mohammed VI, may God bless him, and the Moroccan people. He emphasized the depth of the historical ties between the two brotherly countries and their peoples , as manifested in Morocco's support for the Libyan people in finding a peaceful solution during the various stages of the crisis.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the participants arrived at the following recommendations that constitute the fundamentals of the Network's work program:

- Promoting joint action between governments, parliaments, the private sector and international organizations, within the framework of a system of concerted and coordinated efforts to deal with the issue of food security as a strategic and fundamental approach to address the consequences of the pandemic and the resulting rise in vulnerabilities, especially at the level of the African and Arab regions.
- Urging parliamentarians to unite their efforts to ensure that the topics of food security and nutrition remain among the first priorities of political and legislative agendas in the Arab and African regions.
- Strengthening cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) through calling for adherence to the Guidance Notes and Recommendations of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) aimed at mitigating the pandemic risks to food security and taking proactive measures to reduce their impact on the economy and address the impacts of COVID- 19 outbreaks on food trade, supply chains and markets through effective logistics.
- Inviting decision-makers to take into account- in terms of health emergencies- the protection of the right to food for the people of the African and Arab regions and taking emergency food measures targeting the most vulnerable groups while stressing the importance of strengthening the

social role of food systems during crises and emergencies and making them more sustainable .

- It is imperative to boost joint action, cooperation and solidarity between African and Arab countries as an optimal solution to confront the health, economic and social repercussions of the pandemic of COVID- 19 while noting the impact of armed conflicts and instability in increasing the repercussions of the epidemic, and emphasizing the need to unify efforts , positions and supporting peaceful and political solutions to disputes.

- Promoting dialogue with parliaments, regional and international organizations and bodies, and networks concerned with the issue of food security and nutrition.

The participants agreed to hold an international seminar to contribute to the international parliamentary effort to achieve the common goal of building a global parliamentary coalition to eradicate hunger and malnutrition.

The meeting was attended, in addition to the Speaker of the House of Councilors, Chairman of the Parliamentary Network for Food Security in Africa and the Arab World, by Dr. Jihad Al-Fadil, Deputy Chairman of the Shooraa Council in the Kingdom of Bahrain, Deputy Chairperson of the Network, Dr. Bashir Al-Hosh, Member of the High Council of the State of Libya, Rapporteur of the network, Mr. Ayman Omar, FAO Senior Program Coordinator, Mrs. Florence Roll, FAO Representative in Morocco, and Mr. Mohamed Al-Tayeb, Assistant Secretary-General of the Association of Senates , Shooraa and Equivalent Councils in Africa and the Arab World.