

SEPTEMBER 10, 2014

GBR SPEAKS WITH AZIZ RABBAH, MOROCCO'S MINISTER OF EQUIPMENT, TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS.

Could you please provide us with an overview of your mandated responsibilities as Minister of Transport, Equipment and Logistics?

Aziz Rabbah (AR): The tasks of the Ministry of Equipment, Transport and Logistics are structured on the implementation of the Government's policy in the field of infrastructures, transport and logistics, in order to sustain the strategy of the economy and its integration into the global economy, as well as social development and national planning.

The Ministry's strategic plan for 2014 and 2015 has been articulated as part of the Ministry's set of goals for the period from 2012 to 2016. Could you please provide us with an overview of these goals?

AR: The Department has adopted a new strategy for the period from 2012 to 2016, taking into account the guidelines of the Government program such as the competitiveness of the national and regional economy, integrated and harmonious development of transport infrastructure, pursuing an aggressive investment policy with complementary modes of transport and the promotion of intermodal transport as well as the adjustment of the planning, programming and funding, and the increase of supply and quality of services level.

The Department will continue the policy of major growth projects in all sectors under its responsibility. Thus, in the roads, highways and road transport areas, there will be the achievement of 400 kilometers (km) of roads and 600 km of expressways, determining the future of the national motorway network (2nd motorway program and mechanisms), the 2nd national rural roads program NRRP2, the elaboration of the 3rd NRRP3 program, the rehabilitation of rural roads, the achievement of the Tichka Tunnel (Marrakech-Ouarzazate) and the Highway studies between Oujda and the Algerian border.

In the railways sector, the period from 2014 to 2016 will have the realization of the Tangier-Casablanca High Speed Line, the studies launching of the HSL to Marrakech, contributing to the development of the regional transportation (RER Casablanca), the realization of a 3rd rail on the Kenitra-Casablanca line, the duplication of the Settat-Marrakech line, the rehabilitation of Sidi Kacem-Tangier line, the electrification of Fez-Oujda line and the preparation of the studies of the extension of conventional network (Beni Mellal, Tangier and Tetouan, ...).

Regarding ports and maritime transport, the period from 2014 to 2016 will have the opening of the services of terminal 4 of Tangier Med Port which is conceded to Marsa Maroc, the start of the construction of Terminal 3, in partnership with the private sector, the achievement of new ports (Safi, Nador West Mediterranean, Jorf Lasfar Almheriz ...), the extension of several ports (Dakhla, Tarfaya, Agadir, Larache, Jebha and Sidi Ifni), the fulfillment of the plan of the rehabilitation of Kenitra Mehdiya port, and the creation of another plan for the development of the activity of shipyards and the new studies of Dakhla and Kenitra ports.

For airports and air transportation, the period from 2014 to 2016 will be marked by the preparation of a national master plan to develop the airport infrastructures (Nador, Guelmim, Errachidia, and Tan Tan), the extension of Marrakesh airport and terminals 1 and 2 of Mohammed V airport, the construction of new terminals in Fez, Zagora, Beni Mellal airports, in addition to the completion of the third runway at Mohammed V Airport.

Moreover, a new strategy for the development of air freight will be determined. The Department will also develop a feasibility study for the development of an international air cargo activity hub with the realization of a pole dedicated to air transport training.

For logistics, the period 2014-2016 will have the achievement of the first part of the national logistics areas extended over 2,080 acres as well as the 1st implementation of rail logistics areas in Mita Zenata, Fez, Marrakech and Tangier.

What role does the Ministry foresee the foreign investor playing in its infrastructures development strategy? In what way will public private partnerships (PPPs) be structured?

AR: As you know, several experiences of PPP in different fields exist already in Morocco, particularly in energy production, water and electricity distribution, port operations, airports handling, and other urban transport.

To increase the numbers of projects in PPP, the Ministry has developed a set of projects in all sectors to make private investors informed of the long term vision of the Ministry in terms of transport infrastructure development and the launching of deep reforms to ensure transparency and equity between domestic and foreign operators.

For the implementation of these master plans, the Department aims to be more open to new horizons of partnership and project structured under BOT partnerships in the conception, funding, implementation, operation in the infrastructures and related services.

Therefore, the Ministry has prepared a number of projects that will be implemented under PPP form and now prepares the studies and the related files. In fact, many tender procedures related to those projects will be launched in the coming months. We can quote examples as Highways project (Rabat-Casablanca Continental highway, Guercif-Nador highway, Safi-Beni Mellal, Safi-Tangier central axe, Tangier-Tetouan).

Within the current planning period, what programs will we see enacted to improve infrastructure related to the country's port and maritime services, road and road transportation and rail and rail transportation system?

AR: The amount of investments in the transport sector is around 26 billion Dirhams, most of which is related to the construction of new infrastructures or to the annual maintenance of existing structures.

Thus, we pursue an accurate integrated and coherent investment program to improve the connectivity of Morocco at regional and international levels, ports and airports connectivity to production centers, large cities and between major cities; in addition to programs for local infrastructures contributing to the creation of local wealth, the promotion of local products and the integration of all citizens in the economic dynamics of the country.

For information, the Department has over 320 priority actions for the period from 2014 to 2016. Among the major flagship projects, we include the Tangier Med II ports, the Nador West Med port, Safi port, Kenitra Atlantic port, the achievement of the current highways program to Safi and Beni Mellal to reach 1800 km in 2015 and the launch of a new program of 1,800 km to be implemented over the next 20 years, the achievement of the expressways program and the launching of the rural zones and the development of the roads identified in the plan road 2035.

Furthermore, the significant growth of demand in the last ten years on the rail reinforces our vision for the development of investment in the sector and the promotion of multimodality.

In this sense, the Ministry has launched the study entitled "Morocco railways master plan by 2040", which aims to provide the rail sector a compatible and consistent updated blueprint, tracing the rail network development by 2040 in all its components (high-speed lines, conventional lines, projects for modernization and improving the existing railways performance) to enable the sector to respond to the user's needs, improve its position in the transport market and its leading role in sustainable development.

In order to support the development of tourism and support the development of air traffic, the Department implemented a strategy for developing airport capacity, the consecration of the position of Casablanca airport as a regional hub, improving security and services to companies, users and citizens.

Besides, after the great achievements made by Morocco, in particular the important results generated by the series of reforms in the sector of ports and the changes in the infrastructure development, adding to the success of the Tangier-Med Port at both the regional and the international levels, our country has elaborated a new vision by 2030 based on the protection of all what has been established and the reinforcement of port strategy through the adoption of a participatory and constructive approach in order to ensure the full involvement of actors in the public and private sectors.

The implementation of this ambitious strategy requires the mobilization of financial resources over the next twenty years at an estimated cost of 60 milliards dirhams for port infrastructure.

To conclude, Morocco will experience further major projects in the transport sector through the implementation of various master plans and strategies which is equivalent to an investment volume exceeding 600 billion dirhams over the next 20 years.