

**Report on the Virtual Meeting of the Executive Office of the
Parliamentary Network for Food Security and Nutrition in Africa
and the Arab World chaired by His Excellency Mr. Naam Miyara,
Speaker of the House of Councilors of the Kingdom of Morocco,
December 16, 2021**

Under the patronage of the House of Councilors of the Kingdom of Morocco, and in partnership with the Association of Senates, Shoora and Equivalent Councils in Africa and Arab World (ASSECAA), the virtual meeting of the Executive Office of the Parliamentary Network for Food Security and Nutrition in Africa and the Arab World was held on Thursday, December 16, 2021 via video conference (Zoom).

The meeting was chaired by H.E Naam Miyara, Speaker of the House of Councilors of the Kingdom of Morocco, Chairman of the Association and the Network.

At the start of the meeting, Mr. Miyara welcomed the participants , pointing out that the event was aimed at strengthening dialogue and exchanging visions and experiences on strategic issues related to food security in the African and Arab regions, and submitting proposals for reactivating the network's role and formulating its future work program, especially since the issue of food security has become increasingly important for African and Arab countries .

He also stressed the importance of working towards ensuring food security as well as confronting the economic, social and health repercussions of the Corona pandemic and the challenges to achieving sustainable development, affirming that facing the multidimensional effects of climate change is one of the strongest challenges facing the international community in general, and the countries of our African and Arab regions in particular.

He also touched on the effects that the Corona pandemic has had on food supply chains between countries, given the disruption of movement and imposing strict restrictions on travel. He further stressed the necessity of securing a strategic stock of necessary commodities in African and Arab countries, as well as exerting concerted efforts to boosting African and

Arab indicators in terms of achieving food security, and protecting societies from threats to their health, social and environmental safety.

He confirmed that it is imperative to achieve as many partnerships as possible between producing and importing countries, and stressed the need to form alliances to overcome the obstacles to achieving self-sufficiency between different countries.

With regard to the role of parliamentarians, His Excellency stressed that parliamentarians are considered essential partners in policies related to food security and the fight against hunger and malnutrition, due to their legislative and oversight functions, including the development of public policies related to achieving sustainable development, their participation in discussions related to food security within the framework of regional, regional and international parliamentary organizations, and their contribution to the establishment of national and international networks aimed at achieving food security. He also stressed the importance of the Association of Senates, Shooras and Equivalent Councils in Africa and the Arab world, as well as the Parliamentary Network in terms of promoting parliamentary dialogue and interaction on issues related to food security and providing recommendations and proposals that would contribute to paving the way for joint parliamentary action, in cooperation with governments and various relevant sectors, including by encouraging investments in the field of supporting and ensuring the sustainability, availability and quality of food production, facing shortages and obstacles that prevent achieving the required growth in terms of food production and making it commensurate with population growth, given climatic changes, such as drought, floods and desertification, and taking legislative measures to ensure the enjoyment of the right to adequate, healthy, safe and adequate food, exchange of information and experiences on strategies related to food security and nutrition, raising awareness and presenting studies and proposals in this field.

He also noted that parliamentarians and the network are invited to contribute to global efforts related to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially the second goal of eradicating hunger by 2030, providing food security and improved nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture .

At the conclusion of his speech, Mr. Naam Miyara presented several important proposals related to strengthening the role of the Network in achieving its goals, most notably the development of a road map and work program and strengthening cooperation with national and regional networks in Africa and the Arab world, relevant international organizations, and studying the possibility of concluding a partnership agreement with FAO.

For their part, the participants renewed their congratulations to H.E Mr. Naam Miyara, Speaker of the House of Councilors of the Kingdom of Morocco, for the confidence he gained through his election as Speaker of the House of Councilors, expressing their gratitude and appreciation to the House of Councilors for organizing this important meeting. They also congratulated the Kingdom of Bahrain on its national day that falls on the 16th of December every year. They noted the importance of holding this meeting to discuss the work program of the network in the next stage in light of the developments the world is witnessing, including increasing pressures on food security and nutrition, which left negative effects on the regions of Africa and the Arab world in particular.

Meanwhile, H.E Abdelwasie Yusuf Ali, Secretary General of ASSECAA, delivered a speech in which he thanked the House of Councilors of Morocco for the generous support and endless assistance it has extended to ASSECAA since its establishment. He hoped that Morocco will continue supporting ASSECAA to enable it achieve the goals for which it was established- foremost among them is the enhancement of Afro-Arab cooperation.

He indicated that the convening of this meeting comes at a delicate and exceptional stage that the world is going through, which is characterized by a number of challenges- whether economic, social, developmental, environmental geopolitical or otherwise, not to mention the health challenges arising from the Corona pandemic that badly affected all walks of life and economic sectors, especially food security and nutrition systems. He said that these challenge are coupled with the effects of climate change, population growth, high demand for food, patterns of malnutrition and water scarcity .

He urged parliamentary networks for food security to be more vigilant and to mobilize efforts and put forward solutions and initiatives to confront these challenges and address the health, social and economic repercussions resulting from crises, especially those related to food security and nutrition issues.

He affirmed that the meeting aimed to create a solid base from which to launch the Parliamentary Network for Food Security and Nutrition in Africa and the Arab World, which works under ASSECAA's umbrella to enable it work towards searching for more effective ways to achieve food security in our Arab and African regions, reduce the effects of the Corona pandemic on social and economic reality and face all challenges to food security and nutrition in Africa and the Arab World .

He stressed the need to develop visions, mechanisms and more effective work programs through the network by enhancing its role, and taking the necessary steps to achieve food security and nutrition in Africa and the Arab world.

For his part, H. E Mohamed Al-Tayeb, Assistant Secretary-General of the Association, delivered a welcoming speech, in which he welcomed the participants and thanked them for accepting the invitation to participate in this important meeting of the Executive Office of the Network, stressing that there is a need for strong organizational frameworks, exchange of experiences, and increased investment in scientific research by innovating new ways and improving national and international strategies related to food security in line with the sustainable development goals through forming a strategy for developing technology to provide food and enhance food security; he also stressed the importance of making concerted efforts in this regard.

He also confirmed that enhancing joint global cooperation in today's world is no longer just an option; rather, it is one of the most important ways to overcome global challenges and achieve sustainable development and food security. He noted that international cooperation and partnership relations with international and regional organizations are of particular importance to the Network in order to further coordinate efforts to contribute to solving food security and nutrition issues. He stated that the network must be keen to establish cooperation and partnership relations

with many of these organizations and networks, especially FAO, which has supported the network since its inception. He also conveyed to the participants the greetings of Mr. Ayman Omar, FAO's Senior Regional Program Coordinator, and his apology for not participating due to prior commitments, affirming that FAO will continue supporting the network and its activities.

For her part, Dr. Jihad Abdullah Al-Fadhel, Head of the Services Committee in the Shura Council of the Kingdom of Bahrain, Vice Chairman of the Network, gave a speech in which she reviewed the role of the Network in the previous period and the activities in which it participated in various regional and global forums such as the United Nations and its organizations such as FAO, ESCWA and IFAD, in addition to the Arab Parliament, the League of Arab States, the Pan African Parliament and other relevant organizations. She pointed out that the network was strongly present through its participation in important events to which it was continuously invited to discuss food security issues, as well as the keenness shown by the organizers of such events to get the network's proposals and recommendations. She also thanked FAO, in particular, the FAO senior regional program coordinator, Mr. Ayman Omar, for supporting, encouraging and motivating the network and for the efforts made by FAO to achieve food sustainability in various countries in general.

Dr. Jihad Al-Fadhel presented important proposals to enhance the network's work, most notably the agreement to develop a model law to create a strategic stockpile of necessary commodities, and another law to achieve food justice, and that these proposals should be discussed with Arab and African legislative councils in for the purpose of approving them, while ensuring that periodic coordination meetings are held for the network with FAO, ESCWA, IFAD, and parliamentarians interested in the issue of food security. She further proposed that the network adopt the convening of an Arab-African Parliamentary Summit to discuss the issue of food security in the post-Covid-19 phase.

For his part, Dr. Bashir Al-Hosh, member of the High Council of State in Libya, the network's rapporteur for Arab countries, congratulated H.E Mr. Naam Miyara for being elected Speaker of the House of Councilors, extending congratulations to the Kingdom of Bahrain on its celebrations

of the National Day. With regard to the work of the network, Dr. Al-Hosh praised the great efforts made by the network in the previous period, expressing his hope and confidence that it will continue working at the same pace under the leadership of its new Chairman, Mr. Naam Miyara. He stressed the importance of concerted efforts and dialogues to meet the interests of the Arab and African nations.

He also valued the proposals made by the members of the executive office of the network, expressing his full support for such proposals. He affirmed that the network members should build on these proposals and work on translating them on the ground .

At the conclusion of his speech, he thanked the Kingdom of Morocco, its leadership, its government and the people for their efforts in helping Libya, praising them as an effective country in the region. He hoped that the Corona pandemic would end soon so that Libya could host a meeting for the network. He further expressed his hope that the network will carry out the tasks entrusted to it in the coming months.

During the meeting, Senator Kobani Theko, member of the Senate of the Kingdom of Lesotho, the network's rapporteur on African countries, gave an intervention in which he stressed the importance of holding regular meetings by the network, and proposing new ways to introduce both the Association and the network. He also praised the efforts made by the network in pursuit of sustainable development, in particular the second goal related to eradicating hunger by 2030, and confronting challenges affecting food security issues such as climate change. He pointed out the bilateral cooperation between the Kingdom of Morocco and the Kingdom of Lesotho in the field of food security and combating hunger .

The meeting came up with many important proposals and recommendations that aim to enhance the work of the network as follows:

- Develop a road map and work program for the network and identify priorities of action; create a solid base from which the network will start its work by searching for more effective ways to achieve food security in the Arab and African regions.

-Determine the means by which the network can interact with national, provincial, and regional governmental bodies in Africa and the Arab world as well as with various relevant international organizations .

-Strengthen cooperation with the existing parliamentary networks for food security, and international organizations working in the field of food security, such as FAO, ESCWA, IFAD, and all parties interested in the issue of food security, and ensure that the network holds periodic coordination meetings with these organizations, to ensure that international policies and efforts remain consistent and integrated, and to ensure technical and institutional support to strengthen the network .

-Studying the possibility of concluding a partnership agreement with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), to be signed at the next conference of the Association scheduled be held in the Kingdom of Morocco from 3-5 March 2022, whereby invitations will be sent to member councils of the Association, as well as the Senates of Latin American countries to participate in the event, in the framework of the South-South Dialogue, . This agreement with FAO aims to:

- Establish effective national parliamentary alliances on the issues of food security and the fight against poverty in the rural world;

- Strengthen the role of the Parliamentary Network for Food Security in Africa and the Arab World in enhancing cooperation between alliances and networks of parliamentarians regarding the issue of food security;

-The network, in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), organizes meetings and workshops on issues of food security and rural poverty;

-Involve the members of the Association in preparing and implementing the strategic frameworks of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) at the African and Arab levels.

-Work on developing a model law to create a strategic stockpile for necessary commodities and another law to achieve food justice, and hold virtual meetings with legislative councils in Arab and African countries to adopt and approve it.

- The network adopts the holding of an Arab-African Parliamentary Summit to discuss the issue of food security in the post-pandemic recovery period, as well as the plans set by parliaments to achieve sustainability in food security.

- Urging parliamentarians to assume their responsibility of contributing to raising awareness of the importance of ensuring food security for all citizens and searching for stable ways of living that guarantee them a just and dignified life, and considering the achievement of food security as a top legislative priority.

- Calling decision makers to support farmers and harness the solutions provided by modern technology in the field of agriculture, increase investment in scientific research, work on innovating new methods and improve national and international strategies related to food security in line with the sustainable development goals through formulating technology development strategy to provide food and enhance food security .