

**Royal Activities**

Speeches and interviews of His Majesty the King

2007 Elections

Sahara issue

Politics

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11/19/2008 10:40 PM

Economy

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11/20/2008 02:34 PM

Social

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11/20/2008 02:23 PM

World

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Social

Princess Lalla Meryem attends reception held by High Atlas Foundation in Rabat

Rabat, 13 Nov. 2008 (MAP)- Princes Lalla Meryem, sister of King Mohammed VI of Morocco, attended on Thursday a reception held by the "High Atlas Foundation" (HAF) at the residence of the US Ambassador in Rabat.



Princess Lalla Meryem Attends HAF reception in Rabat

Princess Lalla Meryem, who was welcomed by US. Ambassador, Thomas Riley and his spouse, followed a presentation on the foundation's activities.

The HAF was created in 2000 by former volunteers of the U.S. Peace Corps for the benefit of Moroccan disadvantaged communities.

On this occasion, the Foundation announced its three latest partnerships signed respectively with the Law Faculty of Mohammedia (University Hassan II), the High Commission for Waters and Forests, and the Office Cherifien des phosphates (OCP).

The first partnership provides for creating, by the end of November, a center for Community Consensus-Building and Sustainable development within the Law institution.

The center's main purpose is to train Moroccan students, community, and NGOs in participatory planning, sustainable development and project management.

"The training offered will serve as a catalyst for new development projects benefiting impoverished communities," Deputy President of Hassan II University, Nabil Benchekroun, said.

Those objectives will be achieved through promoting the participation of local populations in determining and implementing priority development projects.

The second seeks to advance development in the villages that neighbor Morocco's national parks and reserves. Presenting this project, Mohamed Berri, an official from the High Commission for Waters and Forests, underlined that the partnership will help realize Morocco's potential as regards fruit-tree growing."

The third provides for expanding rural, economic and social development in the region of Ben-Guérir (center), while strengthening the local environment. It is the first major partnership with the private sector, said Said Moline, a counselor at the OCP.

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Sport

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11/19/2008 08:48 AM

General

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11/20/2008 02:14 PM

Regional

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11/19/2008 08:21 PM

HAF's President Yosef Ben-Meir, a former volunteer Peace Corps (1993-1995) currently professor at the New Mexico University recalled that since 1995, some 150,000 fruit trees were planted in the region of the Atlas, through the foundation which, he said, plans to plant a million fruit trees.

"We are humbled by the confidence and enthusiasm our newest partners have shown us," he said, calling on other partners to show support and exchange their ideas.

As for Riley, he praised the achievements of the foundation since its inception, reiterating support of the US Embassy for such initiatives that help local communities to define their own social, economic and environmental objectives.

The gathering was attended by several Moroccan and American personalities including King's Advisor, André Azoulay, who is member of the Advisory Board of the Foundation.

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122, Avenue Allal Ben Abdellah B.P. 1049 - Rabat - 10000 Téléphone : 037 76.40.83 - 76.16.73  
E-mail : [webmap@map.co.ma](mailto:webmap@map.co.ma) - TéléFax : 037 76.50.05