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## 20 Years: A Generation and a Day in Development Life. Morocco's High Atlas

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*As so many of us ask when we commemorate an anniversary of decades: where have all the years gone? Have we done all we can? Have we been of true service? Did we do right?*

We also may wonder on these occasions what might the future hold. Will our dreams – our Moroccan dreams – come true? Will every village and neighborhood come together, with every young person, every elderly, every woman and man from all circumstances and be part of designing and deciding the future course of their community? And will the High Atlas Foundation (HAF) be of the best service it could as the Moroccan people create the change they seek?

It is the 20th year anniversary of the High Atlas Foundation and its mission in Morocco—an organization born from the service of Peace Corps Volunteers and dedicated Moroccan friends.

With every entity that endures across time, there seems to be a miraculous component—that through unpredictable events, there remains continuity. The mission of HAF is as fixed as the universal principle upon which it is based: the people – those who are impacted by development decisions and actions – are the drivers of lasting change. We are dedicated to the premise that sustainability is manifested by and for local communities. This means that HAF commits to: inclusivity and empowerment so that people are confident as they make decisions that reflect what they need; projects that are the priorities of the people and that cut across the different sectors of life; and partnerships—because the wider and deeper the commitment, the greater the likelihood of implementation and endurance.

After some millions of growing trees later, thousands of families drinking clean water, thousands of people experiencing capacity-building so that they manifest change around them, we have also learned abiding lessons. Ripples of good intentions and of people's projects over time create outcomes that, when observed, help us to realize there is an incalculable amount of impact out there. Impact is experienced by children and grandchildren and will be experienced by generations to come. Development, like planting a tree, is an endeavor that naturally seems to cross into faith.

Sustainability is an operational concept involving the consideration of a multiplicity of factors that require consideration in the planning of development—economic, cultural, technological, financial, environmental, geographic, historical, and gender-based factors. However, sustainability may very well be, after all, the ongoing generation of good effects that are so widespread and so deep in the heart and so across time that they belong to no one but to the people who feel the bounty, power, and ability in the moments of their lives.

As President of the Board of Directors for the Foundation's first 10 years and President of its operations throughout its second decade, and as the one who carried the idea of what became HAF for some years prior to when it was founded in 2000, I am more grateful than I can say for the marvel of people to whom we owe everlasting gratitude. Since there are too many to mention here, and I cannot do justice by mentioning just a few, I will express my gratitude to one person who has made Morocco a potential sustainable development bastion on earth, making the participatory work of HAF and others potentially fully scalable throughout the nation. That person is His Majesty King Mohammed the VI.

The Moroccan Frameworks that guide the people's development are replete with the highest principles of people's driven change and their empowerment. They together form a synergistic powerful pathway forward for lasting development and, yes, prosperity. They are thoughtful, creative, and strategic in their formulation that one finds it seriously challenging to improve upon their design. The existential challenge before the people of Morocco is the fulfillment of the integrated Frameworks that promote sustainable local development.

The opportunity to create bottom-up community development movements that federate and transform public-civil-private sector relationships with sustainable prosperity in the wake, is real and Moroccan. And it is up to its people and agencies to fulfill. I, for one, appreciate the grand, continental, and totally meaningful opportunity – and commit HAF to its life of service to this Moroccan cause, and as a precedent for the world.

To 20 years, to 100 more, and to all we are able to do throughout,

**Dr. Yossef Ben-Meir** – President of the High Atlas Foundation in Marrakech, Morocco

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