Strengthening the European neighbourhood policy

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MOROCCO – EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY – STATE OF PLAY

This Commission working document accompanies the Commission's communication on strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). This document reports on overall progress made on the implementation of the EU-Morocco Action Plan.

The EU-Morocco Action Plan was adopted in July 2005 for a period of five years. Over the past two years relations between the EU and Morocco have been significantly strengthened across the board, mainly because Morocco has shown real interest in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), in which it sees the way forward to the 'advanced status' it has always called for. For the Moroccan authorities, securing the country to Europe is a strategic choice and the Action Plan constitutes an anchorage point for the reforms.

The King has launched numerous initiatives aimed at the modernisation of the state, democratisation and national reconciliation – in particular via the Fairness and Reconciliation Commission, the law on political parties, the law on the liberalisation of the audiovisual sector, the law against torture - and the promotion of economic and social development, in particular the national human development initiative, the status of women, and the fight against poverty. These initiatives are already reflected as tangible commitments in the Action Plan and place Morocco firmly on the path to reform. Many of these political reforms and the reforms aimed at improving the transparency of the economic environment are positive steps towards better governance in Morocco.

In bilateral political relations, the enhanced political dialogue has become a forum for increasingly open political debate. Cooperation in the area of migration has also grown steadily closer. The culmination of cooperation in this area would be the speedy finalisation of the negotiations on a readmission agreement based on a balanced and integrated approach. In 2006 Morocco dismantled a significant terrorist cell on its territory.

In the economic field, real progress has been made in achieving many of the objectives of the Action Plan. Morocco has clearly shown its readiness to bring about in-depth reforms in order to create an impetus for development and poverty alleviation, improve competitiveness and attract foreign investment. Morocco has also finalised a number of cooperation agreements with the EU, in particular on the Galileo satellite navigation system and in the area of air services. Negotiations aimed at liberalising trade in services and the right of establishment, and liberalising agricultural products, processed products and fisheries were also launched in 2006.

However, more efforts are needed in the areas of agricultural reform, facilitation of external trade, trade law, corporate governance, economic diversification and youth unemployment.

In short, Morocco implemented numerous reforms in all the main chapters of the Action Plan; the Government is pushing ahead with its political, economic and social modernisation effort which should enable it to meet its objectives, together with the European Union, in the Action Plan.