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EDITORIAL

A masterstroke!

Mohamed CHAUI

AFTER the feat of the Atlas Lions at the Qatar World Cup, another sequence had to follow to gain momentum and give more hope and dream. The performance of the national team and Morocco's example for the youth of Africa and the Arab world should not be forgotten. It is in this context that the King announced Morocco's candidacy for the joint organization of the 2030 World Cup with Spain and Portugal. The choice of announcing this great news during a ceremony organized by CAF, in Kigali, Rwanda, where all the elite of African football is present, marks a turning point. It is not only Morocco that is involved in this adventure but all of Africa that is part of the momentum. This is a masterstroke that confirms the royal leadership in this continent, especially since it is the first time that a candidacy has come from two continents, for a

planetary event which will celebrate its centenary in 2030. In this perspective, Morocco is considered an essential bridge between the European and African continents and the Arab world, a crossroads of civilizations and a gateway to Africa, which makes the president of the Spanish Government say that it is a "very good and positive message". Obviously, Morocco remains the driving force of development on the continent and at the same time confirms its African roots. For some time now, the country has become a popular destination for CAF and FIFA. Under these conditions, CAF can only mobilize to support this initiative throughout this journey to win the organization of the World Cup. It is also an opportunity to change the perception of African youth, often perceived from a negative angle, and as a source of emigration problems. □

Weekly highlights

Industrial zones: Still big challenges ahead

IN his presentation to the Productive Sectors Committee of the House of Representatives, Ryad Mezzour addressed the constraints that hinder the implementation of the industrial zones program across different regions of Morocco. Before going into detail, the Minister of Trade and Industry recalled the three goals of the industrial land development policy. First, fostering of investment in industry, by offering industrial reception areas at preferential rates and standards that meet quality and sustainability requirements. It is also a question of setting up industrial zones within the reach of all investors, particularly those which have been prepared within the framework of a partnership with the Government. Then, the goal is to reduce territorial and social disparities.

Another goal is to improve the competitiveness and attractiveness of existing industrial zones. It is a question of setting up a legal framework governing the industrial zones in order to face the problems which



reduce their effectiveness.

This was an opportunity for the Minister to specify that the implementation of industrial zone projects faces several challenges, such as the multiplicity of stakeholders in programming and execution. Similarly, discrepancies exist at the level of the zone programming schedule. The Town Planning scheme is spread over 25 years whereas generally, five years are planned for industrial zone projects.

To overcome this situation, the mea-

sures that have been taken do advocate cooperation and coordination with the various stakeholders at the national and local level, particularly at the level of the Ministry in charge of Urbanism and the joint working committees in charge of monitoring the preparation of the urban planning plans. There are also regional councils for everything concerning local development. The mobilization of land for projects must meet the challenge of rising prices for land acquisition. The slowness of the

settlement procedure, the land base, and the influence of speculation do not help matters. Added to this is the absence of a tax system which would be adapted to the specificity of industrial zones relating to the tax on undeveloped land and the tax on collective services. The Ministry is in favor of presenting financial support for industrial zone projects. The goal is to lower marketing prices. Ditto for the incentive of the private sector to invest in these projects. □

Mohamed CHAUI

Textile: Vegan leather to preserve the environment

ANIMAL leather requires more than 17,000 liters of water per kilogram. To put an end to the hemorrhage, the Enactus-EMI club is developing a vegan leather, made from the cactus plant. This innovative project concerned with the environment should appeal to producers and could revolutionize the textile industry. The project, called O'Cuerdo and currently in the prototyping phase, will be sold as raw material to furniture and automobile companies, as well as to leather goods workshops in Morocco. What is its primary interest? This vegan weather will serve as a substitute for animal leather, which is particularly polluting. "The leather textile industry is the most polluting one in the world. It not only consumes lot of water, but it also exposes workers to chemicals that are harmful to their health", explains Salma Fakhouri, co-founder of the startup and member of the Enactus-EMI club. "Our invention responds to these issues with a leather that is biodegradable in production and consumes very



The Enactus-EMI club has just developed a leather made entirely from cactus. This is a promising invention for the textile industry which will limit the impact of this product on the environment

little water, the cactus plant being rich in antioxidants and having minimal carbon dioxide absorption", adds Salma, who is a 2-year student. This is a way to participate effectively in the process of sustainable development. The "vegan" material will be designed using the mature leaves of the cactus, without damaging the plant itself,

making it an eco-responsible but also sustainable alternative. Another strong point of the product is its cost price which will allow it to be manufactured at a lower cost. "We plan to sell our leather to companies at 110 Dirhams (US\$ 11 dollars) per square meter, a cost significantly lower than that of animal leather which ranges between

800 and 1,200 Dirhams (US\$ 80 to 120)", said the student. "The selling price of a perfecto jacket is thus estimated at 645 Dirhams, taking into account the costs of processing the product and logistics", she adds. Almost finalized, O'Cuerdo should be marketed in June of this year. The product will be presented, exhibited, and sold on the web through a dedicated site, but also via social media and at textile fairs. "O'Cuerdo will have its own pages on the most popular media. This is therefore a way of promoting the product on a larger scale", underlines student Salma Fakhouri enthusiastically. Established in 2008, Enactus-EMI is made up of around sixty student members of the school and is behind numerous social projects. The entity also represents the Moroccan club that has been distinguished the most times in the NGO's global competitions, finishing second in Beijing in 2014 and third in Johannesburg in 2015. □

Karim AGOUMI

Business climate: New roadmap

THE Government is launching a new roadmap for improving the business climate. This new 2023-2026 vision was officially announced during an official ceremony, organized on Wednesday, March 15 in Rabat. Aziz Akhannouch, Head of Government, but also other speakers, including Mohcine Jazouli, Minister in charge of Investment, insisted on the fact that “*improving the business climate is an essential lever, if we wish to significantly and sustainably boost private investment*”. Revitalizing the role of the private sector and increasing its share in the overall investment effort is one of the main challenges of the new Investment Charter.

In his speech, the Head of Government insisted on the solidity of the Moroccan economy, which has shown resilience despite the difficult economic situation, linked in particular to the Covid crisis, the war in Ukraine, and other factors. Akhannouch also recalled the various measures put in place for businesses, particularly during the difficult post-Covid period, marked by stimulus requirements.



For Aziz Akhannouch, but also for the other speakers during the presentation of the new roadmap, “*improving the business climate is an essential lever, if we wish to significantly and sustainably boost private investment*”

Today, the goal is to take a new step in economic revitalization. “*We have certainly undertaken ambitious reforms and made major progress in improving the business climate*”, Jazouli stressed. For him, the operationalization of the Mohammed VI Fund for Investment as well as the implementation of the new Investment Charter, are also crucial levers of this momentum.

In the new approach, productive

investment must be used to finance the social state, create added value, and generate stable, quality jobs. According to the Minister in charge of Investment, “*to meet these challenges and achieve common goals, a strong alliance is necessary between the public sector, the private sector, and the banks, with the territories*”. Regarding this last point, he recalled that “*for the first time in the economic history of Morocco, the develop-*

ment, approval, and signing of part of the investment agreements will be transferred to the regional level”. For their part, the private sector and the banks “*will have to support, in turn, the emergence and financing of this new generation of entrepreneurs and investors*”.

As for the new roadmap, it is focused on strategic projects in terms of improving the business climate. It is structured around 3 pillars. These include “*facilitating the act of investing and entrepreneurship*”. As far the second pillar is concerned, it aims to improve competitiveness factors. The third pillar, meanwhile, is focused on entrepreneurship and innovation, through the establishment of support systems for VSMEs and startups, the strengthening of financing and support programs such as Forsa, the development of incubators, in addition to the development of human capital performance. Another crosscutting pillar is also planned. It covers ethics, integrity, and the prevention of corruption. □

Mohamed Ali MRABI

Casablanca: BRTs have been running since March 13

ONLY a few weeks left before the official launch of the Bus Rapid Transit or Casabusway in Casablanca. A hundred drivers started training sessions on Monday, March 13. The people of Casablanca thus saw their busway crisscross Al Qods Boulevard, in the area between the Al Moustakbal crossroads and the Taddart crossroads. This is the start of the first training session for Casabusway drivers, conducted by the RATP Dev Casablanca company, future operator of the two lines. For this first session, lasting 2 weeks, two vehicles are used. Training will continue until the end of June 2023, and a total of 102 drivers will be trained. This step is essential to guarantee the proper functioning of the new mode of transport in its own lane and to ensure a secure service for users. A trial run, on the other hand, is scheduled from the start of June 2023. During these two phases, the busway (or BRT, for Bus Rapid Transit as it is also most often called) will run empty on the entire line, without passengers, under real traffic conditions. Currently, in addi-



tion to the tests in progress, the project is in the phase of setting up ticketing equipment and other equipment, operating and traveler information support systems, as well as traffic light signals. As a reminder, the fleet of these 2 new lines is made up of around forty articulated Mercedes “Citaro L” buses with an integral low floor, 21 meter long, 2.55 meter wide, and 3.12 meter high. These bendy buses will provide

the Casabusway service from July 01, 2023 onwards. Their overall cost is around 230 million Dirhams (USD 23 million). These will be the first 21-meter-long bus vehicles in Morocco offering access through 4 double doors, and with a capacity on board of 168 passengers, including 58 seats. Made in Germany and purchased from the Daimler Evobus & Auto Nejma Maroc SA group, the busways are air-

conditioned and equipped with security cameras, USB chargers, dynamic information screens, and wheelchair access. Nicknamed tram on tires, the BRT complements the public transport offering in Casablanca, with the same performance and quality of service as the Tramway. In addition, the same ticket allows access to both modes of transport. □

Aziza EL AFFAS

Weekly highlights

Football: Morocco secures its place among the great nations

THE royal announcement of Morocco's candidacy for the joint organization of the 2030 World Cup with Spain and Portugal was the big surprise of the ceremony of awarding the prizes of excellence to King Mohammed VI and Paul Kagame, president of Rwanda. Since the last hampered attempt in 2018 to organize the 2026 World Cup, Morocco had hung up its shoes and put this application aside. Today, the King puts this application back at the heart of football news, on the occasion of this ceremony organized by the Confederation of African Football (CAF) in Kigali, Rwanda. It is by thanking the people who are at the origin of the prize, in particular the presidents of FIFA and CAF, that the King took everyone by surprise by announcing the scoop, in the royal message read by the minister of National Education and Sports, Chakib Benmoussa. In any case, in this letter addressed to the audience, the King presented his commitment to Africa and football presented its commitment to Africa and football. Moreover, the Sovereign shares with Paul Kagame an unshakeable confidence in the African continent, in its youth, and in its abilities. He remained faithful to His



conviction that *"the future of Africa depends on its youth and only a proactive policy oriented towards this youth will channel the energy for development"*. The King said clearly that this prize is a tribute to the genius of Africa and to its dazzling youth, as well as a recognition of the choices made to put in place the conditions conducive to its expression and promotion. The awarding of this prize is an opportunity to present the royal vision of football, which is the result of a major project over a certain number of years. The King was keen on making this sport a lever for success and sustainable human development. In addition to being a passion and the expression of creative talent, it is also a vision for the future, a long-term commitment for efficient and transparent governance, and an investment in infrastructure as much as in capital. human, underlined the King. Moreover, one understands better why, in the architecture of the government, the Department of Sports



has been integrated into the Ministry of National Education in order to multiply the practice of sport and football with a view to encouraging and bringing out young talents: *"We are working to root them by uniting sports with education, so as to broaden the practice of football in particular; to bring potential and support detected talents with appropriate training"*, noted HM the King. Morocco has always shown solidarity by making its infrastructure and

experience, particularly in football, available to all African countries wishing to make youth a lever of hope and growth. Indeed, the national teams of several African countries choose the Mohammed VI Complex for football for their match preparation retreats. Several African teams, not having stadiums meeting FIFA standards, have also chosen to play the qualifying matches at the CAN in Morocco. □

Mohamed CHAOUI

Connection

THE joint candidacy of Morocco, Spain, and Portugal is a first in the annals of the Football World Cup. This three-way candidacy has a good chance of succeeding. These countries have experience in this area: Spain has already organized the football World Cup in 1982, and Portugal the Euro. Morocco is not

to be outdone since it has organized the Mondialito three times, the CAN (Africa Cup of Nations referred to as AFCON), the CHAN (African Nations Championship), and other events. If this candidacy wins the contest, it will be organized on two continents and will ensure the connection between Africa and Europe, between the North and the South of the Mediterranean. This joint candidacy will also link the African, Arab,

and Euro-Mediterranean world. It will also be a rallying candidacy around the best of each nation, with the demonstration of an alliance of genius, creativity, experience and means. In this spirit, football will act as a driving force for economic and social development, and a demonstration of the values of perseverance, self-sacrifice, and surpassing oneself, as the national team did during the World Cup in Qatar. □

