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By Yossef Ben-Meir

There is a joy I feel when talking about Morocco, and the role of the High Atlas Foundation in the great national project to catalyze participatory development with all the nation's villages and neighborhoods. It is a dream and reality. Morocco set itself on a path of democratic planning for human development, decentralization, women's freedom, interfaith action, south-south unity, and more. Its hard trials toward effective implementation in all these areas are also completely real and even troubling. But, the opportunity to achieve people's participation in the change they determine and seek can build to a national scale – and it is up to the people if that will come to pass.

For the High Atlas Foundation, the engine for such vast community-driven growth is organic agriculture, the entire value chain, including the monitoring and sale of carbon credits. The new revenue from the agriculture sector we can multiply by five and dedicate it to community planning of development, training facilitators in participatory methods, and be implementing the projects of the people.

I will remember today in Marrakech because I was given the opportunity by Friends of Morocco to share this message and mission with former Peace Corps Volunteers from 16 countries. I am part of them, and our spoken language together is short-hand. I also had the chance to meet them at Hotel Toulousain, our home away from our Peace Corps home in the 1990s when we served. How many times have we developed memories in one place, and then returned again to that same spot in an entirely different point in our lives – and we wonder all kinds of things? That too happened today.

I commit to Morocco because its success as a model pathway for sustainable development is essential for its people and deeply meaningful for the Continent and the Middle East. Morocco is a gateway to a civilization, a crux place, and the realization of its good future is important for the world. So, continue and come here to play a part in

pushing the tide of time and decisions toward fairness. Fulfillment, no matter how promising, is never a given – and the light of our values in our era hangs in the balance.

Dr. Yossef Ben-Meir is President of
High Atlas Foundation

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