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Morocco Looks South, Opts for ECOWAS

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Morocco has officially requested membership in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), a sub-regional grouping that has been steadily forging ahead on path of regional economic integration.



“In the context of the Royal tour in Africa- notably in some west African countries- and following directives from King Mohammed VI, the Kingdom of Morocco informed the President of Liberia, who takes the Presidency of the ECOWAS, of its willingness to join this regional grouping as a fully-fledged member,” the Moroccan foreign ministry announced in a statement.

“This request is in conformity with the provisions of the ECOWAS founding treaty and meets the membership criteria,” added the statement.

Morocco’s bid to join ECOWAS builds on close political, human, historical, religious and economic ties with West African countries, the statement said, noting that during the last few years King Mohammed VI paid 23 visits to 11 countries in the region.

In his landmark speech on the occasion of Morocco’s return to the African Union in Addis Ababa, King Mohammed VI expressed disappointment with the standoff in the Maghreb Union, which remains one of the least integrated regions in the world. He contrasted the state of paralysis in the Maghreb with the dynamism marking the integration efforts in the ECOWAS.

“Today, we regret to see that the Maghreb Union is the least integrated region in the African continent, if not in the whole world. Intra-regional trade has reached 10% between ECOWAS

countries and 19% between SADC countries, while it is still stagnating at less than 3% between Maghreb countries,” King Mohammed VI said in his speech before the AU member states attending the 28th African summit.

The King deplored the stalemate plaguing integration between Maghreb countries and contrasted it with the freedom of movement prevailing in the ECOWAS.

“ECOWAS is offering a reliable space for free movement of persons, goods and capital, economic cooperation between Maghreb countries is at a low level,” said the King.

Before submitting the bid to join the ECOWAS, King Mohammed VI visited several countries in the region where Morocco is one of the largest investors. Recently Morocco gave further substance to its south-south cooperation approach in the continent and sealed an agreement with Nigeria to build the Africa Atlantic Pipeline.

The pipeline will transport natural gas from gas-producing countries in west Africa to Europe and will benefit the whole of West Africa.

The agreement was signed last December during a visit by King Mohammed VI to the Nigerian capital Abuja. The two countries’ sovereign wealth funds will jointly develop the pipeline to run about 4,000 km along the West African coast from Nigeria to Morocco on a route yet to be decided. Coastal ECOWAS countries that will benefit from this project include Benin, Togo, Ghana, Côte d’Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Gambia, Senegal and Mauritania.



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