



THE PARLIAMENTARY NETWORK  
On The World Bank & International Monetary Fund



WORLD BANK GROUP

**SECOND MEETING OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA REGIONAL CHAPTER OF  
THE PARLIAMENTARY NETWORK ON THE WORLD BANK & IMF  
7-8 November 2017, Rabat**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Following the successful launch of the Middle East and North Africa Regional Chapter of the Parliamentary Network on 1–2 December 2016 in Tunis, its second Meeting took place on 7-8 November 2017 in Rabat, Morocco, at the invitation of the Moroccan House of Councillors and its President, H.E. Abdelhakim Benchamach. This event reconvened the members of the regional chapter, as well as new parliamentarians from MENA countries, in order to report on the progress made, discuss the new challenges facing the region, and come up with an action plan for the next year which the participants would be able to bring to their home parliaments.

This year, the meeting brought together 40 parliamentarians from Morocco, Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Tunisia, and Saudi Arabia. A representative of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean was also present.

The three main topics of the MENA Chapter's Second Meeting, chosen in order to reflect the main common challenges facing countries throughout the region, were: economic reforms and governance; migration; and education.

*“We share the same ambition: to be able to create a solid basis for exchange of knowledge and experiences between parliamentarians of the region and the international financial institutions regarding solutions to the challenges of development, and identify priority reforms in the areas of education and migration in the service of development.” – H.E. Abdelhakim Benchamach, President of the House of Councillors, Morocco*

*“The PN Chapter gives parliamentarians the opportunity for a dialogue with donors. I invite you all to have discussions with World Bank and IMF experts in your countries.” – Hon. Olfa Soukri Cherif, MP Tunisia, President of the MENA Chapter, Vice-President of the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank & IMF*

The conference speakers included notably Marie-Françoise Marie Nelly, Country Director for Maghreb and Malta, World Bank Group; and Jihad Azour, Director of the Middle East and Central Asia Department at the International Monetary Fund, along with other experts from the World Bank, IMF, and OECD. The sessions were moderated by the members of the MENA Chapter, as well as World Bank and Parliamentary Network representatives.

*“The gap between aspirations and reality creates deep frustrations. Our collective action should create the conditions for improvement based on trust between population and state in order to draw up a new social contract.” – Marie-Françoise Marie Nelly, Country Director for Maghreb and Malta, World Bank Group*

*“To enhance regional growth prospects, policies should ensure fiscal sustainability while allowing for higher investment and social spending, reform labor markets and educational systems, improve governance, and promote the use of technology and access to finance.” – Jihad Azour, Director of the Middle East and Central Asia Department, IMF*



This Meeting was the occasion to launch a PN National Chapter in Morocco, presided by Hon. Neila Tazi. This Chapter's main focus will be on youth job creation - the topic at the heart of the Parliamentary Network's, as well as World Bank and IMF agendas.

*“The young are losing hope and trust in institutions. We are working to support the youth and make them aware of the path that lies before us.” – Hon. Neila Tazi, member of the House of Councillors, President of the Moroccan Chapter of the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank & IMF*

Subsidies, clientelism in public service, management of public enterprises, lack of transparency and culture of secret, and the social and cultural fallout of conflict were all recognized as the issues common to the whole region in various degrees. However, it was education that became a true uniting factor for all participants of this Meeting as representatives of the youngest region in the world. Obsolete school programmes, skills mismatch with current needs of the labour market, and inequality of opportunities between the privileged layer and the rest of the population were all mentioned as key challenges on top of the agenda of every country in the region. The parliamentarians took great interest in the World Development Report “Learning to Realize Education's Promise”, released by the World Bank in October 2017 and analyzing the ways to make educational systems work to achieve learning for everybody.

*“Students leave school and find themselves unemployed, especially women. We need to promote professional education and training instead of giving out general university diplomas.” – Hon. Abdelkader Chenini, Algeria*

The parliamentarians unanimously acknowledged the need for the MENA Chapter to become more action-oriented, developing a realistic work agenda both on regional and national levels. Numerous countries expressed the desire to host the next meeting of the Regional Chapter in their home parliaments. The event concluded with the speech of H.E. Abdelhakim Benchamach, in which he saluted the high level of discussions that took place during the two days of the meetings, and invited the MENA Chapter to continue working on bringing more countries in its family, assuring all present of the Moroccan House of Councillors' continued support of this initiative.