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As Morocco gradually eases its nationwide lockdown, it continues to receive praise for the response model it adopted in efforts to mitigate the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. Industry minister Moulay Hafid Elalamy forecasts a faster economic recovery as the country prepares itself for a post-Covid-19 era. The tourism ministry, together with the Confédération Nationale du Tourisme (national tourism confederation), puts forward recovery plans aimed at reviving Morocco's tourism industry following a sharp decline as a result of the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Morocco bolsters bilateral relations with various African and European countries in efforts to strengthen its renewable energy sector.

Praise for Morocco's Covid-19 response as lockdown eases ...

Morocco continues to win both continental and international praise for its quick, concerted and consistent **Covid-19** suppression campaign.¹ Several multilateral bodies, including the **African Union (AU)** and the **European Union (EU)**, have lauded Morocco's efforts to mitigate the spread of the virus within its borders.² Morocco was one of the first countries in the **Middle East and North Africa (MENA)** region to implement strict lockdown measures by declaring a state of health emergency on 19 March, which it later extended until 10 July to protect its citizens from a second spike of the Covid-19 pandemic.³ The initial state of health emergency included the closure of borders, the shutdown of air and sea links, as well as the closure of a number of public spaces, namely schools, bars, mosques, and restaurants (see *ARC Briefing Morocco April, May 2020*).

The government's aggressive response to the pandemic has allowed Morocco to keep its confirmed cases just below 9,000 with a 2.4% fatality rate.⁴ At present Morocco's mortality rate is just under 6 deaths per one million inhabitants, significantly lower than those observed in countries with better-recognised public health systems in the MENA region, including **Saudi Arabia** and the **United Arab Emirates**, which have both registered 30 deaths per one million inhabitants, and **Qatar**, which has registered 27 deaths per one million people.⁵

COVID-19 deaths worldwide per one million population ⁶			
	Confirmed deaths	Population (millions)	Deaths per million
Morocco	212	36.03	5.88
Qatar	76	2.78	27.3
United Arab Emirates	291	9.63	30.2
Saudi Arabia	1011	33.7	30

¹ Source, analyst, Pretoria

² Source, analyst, Pretoria

³ Morocco World News, 10 Jun 2020

⁴ Morocco World News, 15 June 2020

⁵ Statista, 13 May 2020

⁶ Statista, 13 May 2020

The health ministry confirmed 45 new Covid-19 cases on 15 June, bringing the total to 8,838 and increasing Morocco's active case count to 847.⁷ The ministry also announced 14 new recoveries, taking the total recovery count to 7,779. The ministry confirmed there were no new Covid-19-related deaths, keeping the death toll at 212.⁸ Morocco's population is roughly 37 million.⁹

Morocco is currently in the first phase of easing its nationwide lockdown. The strategy divides Moroccan regions and provinces into two zones, depending on their epidemiological situation. Citizens in the first zone can now leave their homes without special authorisation, while those in the second zone must continue to self-isolate.¹⁰ Interior minister **Abdelouafi Laftit** and health minister **Khalid Ait Taleb** announced in a joint press briefing on 9 June that the government would begin to gradually reopen economic and social activities in several stages as of 10 June.¹¹

"In order to preserve the achievements made by our country in controlling the Covid-19 pandemic, and taking into account the risk during the spread of the virus, and in order to safeguard the health of its citizens, the Council of government is extending the state of health emergency throughout the national territory for a period of one month."¹²

An instrumental component of Morocco's Covid-19 suppression campaign has been an innovation-driven approach centred on broad-based industrial mobilisation.¹³ In recent years, Morocco has placed fundamental emphasis on restructuring its industrial sectors in line with the country's **Industrial Acceleration Plan 2014-20**.¹⁴ Morocco's textile industry, which employed 185,000 workers in 1,600 companies and made up 15% of the industrial Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2019, has played a crucial role in assisting the country meet the health system's medical needs with many textile and clothing firms producing medical masks.¹⁵ The government has required every citizen to wear masks in public spaces as the spread of Covid-19 persisted, and has distributed medical masks on a mass scale.¹⁶

Alongside the increase in production capacity of medical masks, health care solutions have been central to the country's Covid-19 prevention methods.¹⁷ Several Moroccan inventors, including scientists, researchers, and engineers, have dedicated their time and energy to researching, designing and constructing tools to assist in the battle against the Covid-19 pandemic. These include an infrared thermometer, an intelligent mask, an automated ventilator, and an artificial respirator.¹⁸ On the economic front, Morocco has established a fund worth more than \$1 billion to cushion the blow and assist its most vulnerable citizens.¹⁹

... amid forecasts of faster economic recovery for Morocco

Morocco's GDP growth is forecasted to fall to -3.7% in 2020 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic but may increase to 4.8% in 2021, subject to the post-pandemic global economic recovery and landscape.²⁰ Although the economy has enjoyed stability and low levels of inflation in recent years, Morocco now faces the challenge of reviving its national economy and resuming business, trade, and social activities.²¹

⁷ Morocco World News, 15 Jun 2020

⁸ Morocco World News, 15 Jun 2020

⁹ Worldometers, accessed 17 Jun 2020

¹⁰ Morocco World News, 10 Jun 2020

¹¹ Maroc.ma, 10 Jun 2020

¹² Maroc.ma, 10 Jun 2020

¹³ Source, analyst, Pretoria

¹⁴ Source, analyst, Pretoria

¹⁵ Atalyar, 28 May 2020

¹⁶ Atalyar, 28 May 2020

¹⁷ Source, analyst, Pretoria

¹⁸ Atalyar, 28 May 2020

¹⁹ World Political Review, 15 Jun 2020

²⁰ International Monetary Fund, 14 Apr 2020

²¹ Source, analyst, Pretoria

Industry minister **Moulay Hafid Elalamy** is optimistic that Morocco's economic recovery post-Covid-19 will be significantly faster than a number of financial and economic institutions, including the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**, have forecast.²² Elalamy claimed on 6 June that Morocco's markets are returning to their pre-Covid-19 positions, basing his assertions on **Standard & Poor's** indicators of a 20% decrease in industrial transactions versus the 30% it projected in May.²³

Morocco's car manufacturing industry has been one of the first globally to resume its activities.²⁴ While car factories were forced to remain closed in other parts of the world, Morocco's car manufacturing sector continued functioning during the country's nationwide lockdown.²⁵ Elalamy attributed the rapid resumption in production to Morocco's low production costs, which are among the most competitive globally.²⁶

In its efforts to speed economic recovery, the **Arab Monetary Fund (AMF)** provided Morocco with a MAD 204 billion (\$211m) loan on 5 June to assist with its post-Covid-19 economic recovery and address the repercussions of the Covid-19 crisis.²⁷ The global economic transformation opens up new opportunities for Morocco.²⁸ Strategy and economic diplomacy analyst **Amine Laghidi** believes Morocco has the potential to become a hub for the transformation of **African** agricultural and industrial exports post-Covid-19:

*"In this period of crisis, food security represents an unavoidable opportunity for Morocco. Morocco has also undoubtedly demonstrated its ability to locally produce protective face masks for its population in record time and to mobilise its industries to support national efforts to tackle Covid-19."*²⁹

Major Moroccan bank **Attariwafa Bank** predicts that telecommunications, agri-food activities, modern distribution, and precious metals will be among the sectors that will emerge strengthened from the Covid-19 global pandemic.³⁰ Attariwafa's research centre, **Attijari Global Research (AGR)**, predicts that the Covid-19 crisis and the realisation of the importance of food safety for large economies are likely to boost new export opportunities within Morocco's agri-food sector.³¹

... and attempts to revive its tourism industry

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a drastic effect on global tourism, and Morocco has been particularly hard-hit by the suspension of flights, closure of non-essential businesses, and limited movement.³² Morocco's tourism industry faces an uncertain future and may endure a painful recovery, having seen a sharp decline in the first four months of 2020.³³ The number of tourists fell by 45% in comparison with the same time frame in 2019.³⁴ The sector is the second largest contributor to the economy, accounting for 11% of its GDP.³⁵ The **Confédération Nationale du Tourisme (CNT)** (national tourism confederation) forecast a loss of up to MAD 33 billion (\$3 billion) in April alone, with approximately 50,000 people losing their jobs and 8,500 companies on the brink of bankruptcy.³⁶

²² Morocco World News, 11 Jun 2020

²³ Morocco World News, 11 Jun 2020

²⁴ The North Africa Post, 11 Jun 2020

²⁵ The North Africa Post, 11 Jun 2020

²⁶ The North Africa Post, 11 Jun 2020

²⁷ Morocco World News, 5 Jun 2020

²⁸ Source, analyst, Pretoria

²⁹ Morocco World News, 22 May 2020

³⁰ Atalyar, 15 May 2020

³¹ Atalyar, 15 May 2020

³² Morocco World News, 5 June 2020

³³ Morocco World News, 11 Jun 2020

³⁴ Morocco World News, 11 Jun 2020

³⁵ Morocco World News, 5 Jun 2020

³⁶ Morocco World News, 5 Jun 2020

Part of Morocco's economic recovery strategy requires an effective plan to revive the industry.³⁷ Tourism minister **Nadia Fettah El Alaoui** announced on 8 June that Morocco is working to re-establish itself as a global destination for tourists in a post-Covid-19 era.³⁸ The tourism ministry is devising a plan to revive tourism and assist businesses that have been heavily affected by the pandemic.³⁹ The plan focuses primarily on the stimulation of domestic tourism, aiming to preserve employment, skills, and capacities of professionals in the sector.

CNT secretary-general **Wissal El Gharbaoui** has developed a scenario-based recovery plan aiming to ensure the survival of thousands of tourism businesses, to mitigate their losses from cancelled reservations from foreign tourists, and to maintain their liquidity to enable them to meet financial targets following the months-long shutdown of the industry as a result of the enforced state of health emergency.⁴⁰

Morocco fosters partnerships in renewable energy

Morocco is seeking to transform its renewable energy sector by strengthening bilateral ties with a number of countries in Africa and **Europe**. Morocco aims to generate approximately 52% of its electricity from renewable energies by 2030 as part of the **National Energy Strategy** it adopted in 2009.⁴¹ In a virtual meeting on 22 May, energy, minerals and environment minister **Aziz Rabbah** and his Ethiopian counterpart, water, irrigation and energy minister **Sileshi Bekele**, discussed the possibility of accelerating the implementation of the **Coalition for Sustainable Energy Access** in efforts to strengthen their partnerships in the field of renewable energy and improve the capacity of the electricity sector.⁴²

Morocco's ambassador to **Germany**, **Zohour Alaoui** and Germany's federal minister for economic cooperation and development, **Gerd Muller**, signed a partnership agreement in **Berlin** (Germany) on 10 June to develop the production of green hydrogen and drive research and investment projects that aim to create jobs, preserve the environment and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions.⁴³ Noting that Morocco is among countries that excel in renewable energy development, Rabbah said on 12 June that the deal with Germany would assist and accelerate Morocco's transition to renewable energy:

"Cooperation in the 'Power to X' sector, which is part of the Moroccan-German energy partnership, will contribute to the acceleration of the national energy transition and the implementation of Morocco's climate commitments."⁴⁴

Morocco and Germany have committed to establish two projects under the signed agreement with €9 billion (\$10.1 billion) allocated to drive the projects.⁴⁵ The "Power-to X" project will focus on production of green hydrogen while the second project will advance research related to "Power-to-X" and serve as a catalyst to promote knowledge and skills development.⁴⁶ Morocco is likely to benefit from the agreement across numerous sectors, including transport and mining.⁴⁷

³⁷ Morocco World News, 5 Jun 2020

³⁸ Morocco World News, 11 Jun 2020

³⁹ Source, analyst, Pretoria

⁴⁰ The Arab Weekly, 10 Jun 2020

⁴¹ Morocco World News, 12 Jun 2020

⁴² Afrik21, 29 May 2020

⁴³ Morocco World News, 12 Jun 2020

⁴⁴ Minister Aziz Rabbah quoted by Morocco World News, 12 Jun 2020

⁴⁵ Morocco World News, 12 Jun 2020

⁴⁶ Morocco World News, 12 Jun 2020

⁴⁷ Afrik 21, 15 Jun 2020

Planner

2021 **Marrakech (Morocco) International Monetary Fund and World Bank** annual meetings to take place in Morocco;

2021 **(Morocco)** Scheduled legislative, regional and local elections;

Chronology

16 Jun 2020 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Morocco's **Credit Agricole** bank announces the launch of a programme to support Morocco's economic recovery post-**Covid-19**;

16 Jun 2020 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. The foreign affairs ministry announces its efforts to repatriate approximately 300 Moroccans stranded in **Turkey**;

15 Jun 2020 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. The **Office National des Hydrocarbures et des Mines (ONHYM)** (national hydrocarbons and mines office) signs a two-year reconnaissance contract with **United States**-based oil company **Conoco Phillips Morocco Ventures** for the exploration of the northern on-shore area of **Mesorif**;

15 Jun 2020 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Morocco considers extending financial aid allocated to families in precarious conditions;

15 Jun 2020 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. A number of **African Union (AU)** states including **Mauritania, Senegal, Niger** and **Guinea Bissau** thank Morocco for relief initiatives and medical supplies donated in efforts to assist with the **Covid-19** health crisis;

13 Jun 2020 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Approximately 18.5 million face masks have been produced and exported from Morocco to **European** and **African** markets;

11 Jun 2020 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Industry minister **Moulay Hafid Elalamy** denounces the call to reduce telecoms prices, asserting that Morocco's telecom prices are among the lowest in the world and will not be reduced;

9 Jun 2020 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Government spokesperson **Said Amzazi** announces that government has decided to extend the country's state of emergency until 10 July;

5 Jun 2020 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Regional financial organisation **Arab Monetary Fund** provides a \$211m loan to **Morocco** to assist it in undertaking public finance reforms amid the **covid-19** pandemic;

29 May 2020 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Former prime minister **Abderrahmane El Youssoufi** dies aged 96 following a prolonged illness;

20 May 2020 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Economy minister **Mohamed Benchaaboun** and health minister **Khalid Ait Taleb** sign an agreement with **European Union** ambassador to **Morocco Claudia Wiedey** for an aid package from the **European Union** of MAD 1.1 billion (\$111m) to support Morocco's health sector;

20 May 2020 **Rabat (Morocco)** *The North Africa Post*. **Arab Monetary Fund** grants **Morocco** a \$127m loan to provide financial resources amid the **coronavirus** crisis;

18 May 2020 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Prime minister **Saad Eddine El Othmani** announces the extension of the state of emergency for three more weeks until 10 June;

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