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The International Monetary Fund (IMF) reports Morocco has successfully returned to a path of economic growth following a tough 2020, forecasting economic growth of 4.5% in 2021 and 4.4% in 2022. United States-based credit rating agency Standard and Poor's (S&P) downgrades Morocco's local and foreign currency rating to "junk" status from BB+ to BBB-, citing the country's economic contraction and growing budget deficit. Morocco's high-yield non-investment grade could impact its finances in the near future. Morocco receives further global affirmation of its control over the disputed area of Western Sahara as the IMF becomes the latest international institution to use the undivided map of Morocco in its graphics. The transport ministry announces plans to develop a roadmap for reenergising the local tourist transport sector. Recent Covid-19 data suggest that Morocco's rate of positive cases is increasing, despite the ongoing national vaccination campaign.

IMF forecasts 4.5% growth in 2021 ...

The **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**, in its the **World Economic Outlook Report** published on 6 April, predicts that Morocco's economy will grow by 4.5% in 2021 and 4.4% in 2022.¹ The IMF's forecasts show that Morocco has successfully returned to a path of economic growth following a tough 2020 due to the impact of **Covid-19**. The IMF's **Middle East, North Africa (MENA)** and **Central Asia** director, **Jihad Azour**, notes that Morocco's economy is "one of the most dynamic economies to adapt to restrictions as well as opportunities," within the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.² In order to address the impact of Covid-19 on its economy, Morocco made use of emergency funds from its donors, including \$3 billion from the IMF and \$460 from the **African Development Bank (AfDB)**.³

The IMF forecast that Morocco's unemployment rate should decrease to 10.5% in 2021, down from 11.9% in 2020, and further decrease to 9.7% in 2022.⁴ The report revises Morocco's 2020 inflation rate to 0.6% compared to the 0.2% that the IMF had predicted in its October 2020 publication.⁵ The IMF expects that inflation will increase to 0.8% in 2021 and 1.2% in 2022.⁶ The IMF's forecasts are in line with those made by the AfDB, which predicted in March that Morocco's economy will see 4.5% growth in 2021.⁷ However during an **Economic Monitoring Committee** meeting on 2 April, economy minister **Mohamed Benchaaboun** estimated that Morocco's economy will grow by 5.2%, 0.7% higher than the IMF and AfDB's forecasts.⁸

Morocco's successful vaccination campaign and promising agricultural season are the main factors behind the optimistic projections. However, Benchaaboun noted that Morocco's export-related sectors, particularly automotive, clothing and textiles, are showing signs of slowdown due to the impact of the pandemic on the **European** market.⁹ The IMF expects Morocco's current account balance to reach -3.8% in 2021 and -4% in 2022, after recording a -2.2% balance in 2020.¹⁰ However,

¹ International Monetary Fund, 6 Apr 2021

² Morocco World News, 12 Apr 2021

³ Morocco World News, 8 Apr 2021

⁴ International Monetary Fund, 6 Apr 2021

⁵ International Monetary Fund, 6 Apr 2021

⁶ International Monetary Fund, 6 Apr 2021

⁷ Morocco World News, 8 Apr 2021

⁸ Morocco World News, 8 Apr 2021

⁹ Morocco World News, 8 Apr 2021

¹⁰ International Monetary Fund, 6 Apr 2021

the IMF's projections are vulnerable to Covid-19-related developments and global vaccination campaigns.¹¹ The IMF in January praised Morocco for its response to the pandemic, describing its strategy as "*prompt and appropriate*",¹² noting that the country's internationally recognised national vaccination campaign will be a "*critical factor*" in its recovery.¹³ The IMF's annual meeting with the **World Bank** that was scheduled to take place in **Marrakech** in October will now take place in 2022.¹⁴

... as S&P downgrades Morocco rating

United States (US)-based credit rating agency **Standard and Poor's (S&P)** on 2 April downgraded Morocco's local and foreign currency rating to "*junk*" status from BB+ to BBB-, citing the country's economic contraction and growing budget deficit.¹⁵ The new rating means Morocco now has a high-yield non-investment grade that could impact its finances in the near future.¹⁶ The S&P downgrade is in line with those of US-based agencies **Moody's** and **Fitch Ratings**, which have given Morocco their highest non-investment grade rating.¹⁷

The new S&P rating covers both Morocco's foreign currency credit rating and its local currency credit rating.¹⁸ The foreign currency credit rating takes into account economic factors to determine a country's ability of to repay debts using foreign currency, usually in US dollars or euros, while the local currency rating refers to its ability to repay its debts using its own local currency, in Morocco's case, the dirham.¹⁹ The main reasons given for S&P's downgrade are the global economy and domestic factors such as increased spending.²⁰ Since Morocco announced it will increase spending on social benefits such as universal healthcare and expanded pensions, downgrades by the US rating houses have slowly undermined the country's ability to gather funds abroad.²¹

Despite downgrading Morocco's foreign and local currency ratings, S&P improved the country's outlook from "*negative*" to "*stable*".²² However, S&P noted it expects the country's budgetary consolidation – cutting debt or spending in order to reduce interest payments as a share of gross domestic product (GDP) – over 2023-2024 to be "*slow*".²³ S&P also expressed concern over an increase in Morocco's state guarantees, which it said could further exacerbate budgetary pressure.²⁴

While Morocco is unquestionably facing economic issues, similar to the rest of the world, analysts argue that the three rating houses have a tendency to create a self-fulfilling prophecy.²⁵ Downgrading a country's rating makes it harder for countries to gather capital, obliging them to pay higher rates, which in turn makes the agency's prediction a reality. A 2020 report by the **African Union (AU)** concludes that credit rating agencies are worsening the economic consequences of the pandemic in **Africa**.²⁶ The report also notes that the three US credit rating houses have impaired the abilities of African states to raise capital and are disproportionately "*aggressive*" with African countries.²⁷

¹¹ Morocco World News, 8 Apr 2021

¹² Morocco World News, 6 Jan 2021

¹³ Morocco World News, 12 Apr 2021

¹⁴ Morocco World News, 8 Apr 2021

¹⁵ Bloomberg, 2 Apr 2021

¹⁶ Morocco World News, 3 Apr 2021

¹⁷ Bloomberg, 2 Apr 2021

¹⁸ Morocco World News, 3 Apr 2021

¹⁹ Morocco World News, 3 Apr 2021

²⁰ Morocco World News, 3 Apr 2021

²¹ Morocco World News, 3 Apr 2021

²² Bloomberg, 2 Apr 2021

²³ Bloomberg, 2 Apr 2021

²⁴ Bloomberg, 2 Apr 2021

²⁵ Morocco World News, 30 Oct 2020

²⁶ African Peer Review Mechanism, 9 Jul 2020

²⁷ African Peer Review Mechanism, 9 Jul 2020

International recognition grows for Morocco's control over Western Sahara

The Moroccan government has recently received further global affirmation of its control over the disputed area of **Western Sahara**, the vast disputed territory bordering Morocco, **Mauritania** and **Algeria** that was previously under **Spanish** control. The IMF, in its latest global growth forecast (see above), used the undivided map of Morocco in its graphics.²⁸ The undivided map has also been appearing in financial publications such as **Bloomberg** and many US -based organisations have recently adopted it in their official graphics. The **US National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)**, the **US State Department**, **Delta Airlines** and the **Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)** featured Morocco's undivided map in March.²⁹

In further demonstration of growing pro-Morocco consensus on the Western Sahara question, US secretary of state **Anthony Blinken** on 29 March urged the **United Nations (UN)** to speed up the process of appointing a new envoy for Western Sahara³⁰ while **France's** cooperative news agency, **Agence France-Presse (AFP)** recently described Western Sahara's **Polisario Front** members as "separatists", supporting France's position on Western Sahara.³¹ The Polisario Front is an armed group demanding independence for the Western Sahara. Opinions on the Western Sahara question are also shifting among officials in **Kenya** where recent developments are reported to show a divide between the opinions of President **Uhuru Kenyatta** (2013-present) and deputy president **William Ruto**.³²

Other countries such as **Algeria** continue to challenge Morocco's control of the Western Sahara. Tensions with Algeria show no signs of abating. Algerian television channel **Ennahar** recently followed **Algiers-based Echorouk TV** in portraying Morocco's King **Mohammed VI** (1999-present) as a "puppet" in February.³³ Following Echorouk's broadcast, Morocco's **House of Representatives** (lower house of parliament) submitted an agenda to Algeria's parliament regarding its recent manoeuvres and hostility toward the king and Moroccan interests (see *ARC Briefing Morocco February 2021*).³⁴ Prime minister **Saad Eddine El Othmani** published a **Tweet** on 13 February condemning the Echorouk broadcast and attributing the insults to Algeria's resentment of its neighbour's "continuous successes in different levels, including the dossier of the Moroccan Sahara".³⁵

Although Moroccan armed forces and the Polisario Front have been fighting for decades over Western Sahara, recent tensions between Algeria and Morocco stem from the former US president **Donald Trump** (2017-2021) administration's recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over the Western Sahara on 10 December.³⁶ Morocco accuses Algeria of supporting separatism in the region. The UN brokered a ceasefire in 1991 but a planned referendum on independence was never held and the final status of the territory remained unresolved.³⁷ However, the US became the first country to recognise Morocco's claim over the entire Western Sahara and reaffirmed Morocco's proposal to grant limited autonomy to **Sahrawis** under overarching Moroccan control, noting that,

*"The United States believes that an independent Sahrawi State is not a realistic option for resolving the conflict and that genuine autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty is the only feasible solution."*³⁸

While Morocco has on multiple occasions reiterated its adherence to the ceasefire agreement, it has made it clear that it will respond firmly to any attacks by separatists.³⁹ Morocco's armed forces

²⁸ Morocco World News, 10 Apr 2021

²⁹ Morocco World News, 10 Apr 2021

³⁰ United States State Department, 29 Mar 2021

³¹ Agency France Press, 12 Apr 2021

³² Morocco World News, 10 Apr 2021

³³ Morocco World News, 10 Apr 2021

³⁴ Morocco World News, 14 Feb 2021

³⁵ Morocco World News, 14 Feb 2021

³⁶ Al Jazeera, 11 Dec 2020

³⁷ Al Jazeera, 11 Dec 2020

³⁸ Al Jazeera, 11 Dec 2020

thwarted an attempted infiltration by Polisario militias on 8 April, killing commander in charge **Addah Al-Bendir** in a drone strike while he was reportedly leading an attempted raid on positions along Morocco's sand wall.⁴⁰ Morocco's armed forces also killed senior Polisario commanding officer **E Najem Ould Ed'Dia** on 11 April.⁴¹

Covid-19 cases growing at increasing rate

Recent data suggest Morocco's Covid-19 epidemic is increasing despite its on-going national vaccination campaign, casting doubt on the effectiveness of the vaccines in containing the Covid-19 virus. Intensive care occupancy has increased from 13.5% of intensive care beds for Covid-19 patients on 26 March to 14.2% on 10 April.⁴² As of 16 April, Morocco has recorded 504,260 cases in its population of 36.5 million, with 490,366 recoveries and 8,927 Covid-19-related deaths.⁴³ Regionally, Covid-19 continues to impact the densely populated region of **Grand Casablanca-Settat**, where the majority of Morocco's new cases have been detected. The religious month of **Ramadan** is expected to pose challenges for curtailing the spread of Covid-19. However, government has extended the night curfew during Ramadan in order to keep case numbers low.⁴⁴

In a positive development for Morocco, **Our World in Data** in a 9 April update noted that Morocco had fully vaccinated 11% of its population and leads Africa in the vaccination campaign against the Covid-19 virus.⁴⁵ By comparison, **South Africa** and **Zimbabwe** have only inoculated one dose to 0.48% and 1.03% of their populations respectively.⁴⁶ Morocco began its vaccination campaign in late January and hopes to achieve herd immunity once 80% of its population is vaccinated.⁴⁷ The campaign is currently prioritising second vaccinations amid a halt on vaccine imports from **India**. As of 10 April, roughly four and a half million citizens had received their first dose of the vaccine while just over four million had received both doses.⁴⁸

Roadmap to boost post-Covid tourist transport sector

The ministry of equipment, transport, logistics and water announced on 9 April its plans to develop a roadmap for re-energising the local tourist transport sector. The ministry noted the need to take action "*as soon as possible*" in order to alleviate the heavy economic damage inflicted by the pandemic on the sector.⁴⁹ The announcement came during a meeting held in coordination with various stakeholders and professional representatives of the sectors, and is part of the growing dialogue between public and private sectors.⁵⁰ Particular focus was given to understanding problems that arose in Morocco's tourist transport sector following the emergence of the pandemic.

The ministry noted that following "*broad and constructive*" discussions with all stakeholders, participants suggested that in order to support the companies weakened by the crisis, the government revise some provisions of the ministerial decree published on 6 July, "*on the definition of the characteristics and conditions of the equipment of vehicles intended for tourist transport*".⁵¹ The transport secretary general noted that in its roadmap, the ministry plans to integrate proposals submitted by professionals from the sector, and invited stakeholders to send suggestions for amending the ministerial decree and the draft programme contract relating to tourist transport.⁵²

³⁹ The Arab Weekly, 8 Apr 2021

⁴⁰ The Arab Weekly, 8 Apr 2021

⁴¹ Futuro Sahara, 11 Apr 2021

⁴² Morocco World News, 10 Apr 2021

⁴³ Worldometers, 16 Apr 2021

⁴⁴ Morocco World News, 9 Apr 2021

⁴⁵ Our World in Data, 9 Apr 2021

⁴⁶ Morocco World News, 9 Apr 2021

⁴⁷ Morocco World News, 9 Apr 2021

⁴⁸ Morocco World News, 10 Apr 2021

⁴⁹ Morocco World News, 11 Apr 2021

⁵⁰ Morocco World News, 11 Apr 2021

⁵¹ Ministère de l'Équipement, du Transport, de la Logistique et de l'Eau, 9 Apr 2021

⁵² Ministère de l'Équipement, du Transport, de la Logistique et de l'Eau, 9 Apr 2021

Morocco's tourism industry has suffered severe economic consequences from the Covid-19 pandemic and measures to curb its spread. Tourism revenue declined by 53.8% in 2020 after seeing an increase of 7.8% in 2019.⁵³ Statistics released by the **Directorate of Studies and Financial Projection** on 22 February show a loss of MAD 42.4 billion (\$4.77 billion) but note a "*significant slowdown in the pace of decline recorded in the fourth quarter of 2020*" to -46.1%.⁵⁴ In the previous economic quarter, the same indicator recorded an 80% contraction due to Covid-19-related lockdown measures as of September 2020.⁵⁵ The volume of tourists in Morocco decreased by 78.9% at the end of November 2020 compared to a 5.3% increase during the first eleven months in 2019.⁵⁶ The number of overnight stays also experienced a decline of 72.3% after an initial increase of 5.2%. The **World Tourism Organization** notes that the global flow of tourists decreased by 74% in 2020, while the Middle East and Africa recorded a 75% decline in tourist arrivals.⁵⁷

With the emergence of new Covid-19 strains, the government of Morocco has suspended flights from over 39 countries, which will further hit its already Covid-19-battered tourism sector. Flights to and from the following countries are suspended:⁵⁸

Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Cameroon, Croatia, Czech Republic, The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guinea, Ireland, Italy, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Mozambique, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom.⁵⁹

⁵³ Morocco World News, 23 Feb 2021

⁵⁴ Directorate of Studies and Financial Projection, 22 Feb 2021

⁵⁵ Morocco World News, 23 Feb 2021

⁵⁶ Morocco World News, 23 Feb 2021

⁵⁷ Morocco World News, 23 Feb 2021

⁵⁸ United States Embassy & Consulates in Morocco, 29 Apr 2021

⁵⁹ United States Embassy & Consulates in Morocco, 29 Apr 2021

Planner

Feb-May 2021 **(Morocco)** National vaccination programme;

2021 **(Morocco)** Scheduled construction of five new dams;

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

2021 **Oued Zem (Morocco)** Scheduled opening of automotive testing centre;

Q4 2021 **Marrakech (Morocco)** 24th **General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)**

2022 **Marrakech (Morocco)** **International Monetary Fund** and **World Bank** annual meetings to take place in Morocco;

Chronology

14 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Holy month of Ramadan begins;

12 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. **International Monetary Fund (IMF) Middle East, North Africa (MENA) and Central Asia** director **Jihad Azour** says Morocco has returned to the path of growth following a difficult 2020 due to the impact of **Covid-19**;

11 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Futuro Sahara*. Morocco's armed forces kill senior **Polisario** commanding officer **E Najem Ould Ed'Dia**;

11 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Morocco to develop roadmap for re-energising tourist transport sector;

11 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *North Africa Post*. The **International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL)** says Morocco played a strong role in the INTERPOL-led crackdown on human trafficking, which led to the arrest of at least 195 people;

10 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Countered-IED Report*. Members of **United States** and Moroccan military forces participate in the **Humanitarian Mine Action (HMA)**;

10 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. **Covid-19** cases are increasing again in Morocco in the midst of the national vaccination campaign;

10 Apr 2021 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Morocco World News*. Algerian television channel **Ennahar** follows Algiers-based **Echorouk TV** in portraying King **Mohammed VI** as a "puppet";

9 Apr 2021 **Casablanca (Morocco)** *archyde.com*. Industry, digital, and green economy minister **Moulay Hafid Elalamy** inaugurates the **Technical Center For Vehicle Equipment Industries (CETIEV 2.0)** at the **Morocco Technical Center (MTC)** in **Casablanca**;

10 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** in its latest global growth forecast uses the undivided map of Morocco in its graphics;

9 Apr 2021 **Laayoune (Morocco)** *Morocco Shafaqna*. Industry, trade and new technologies minister **Abdelkader Amara** confirms the construction of the newest and longest bridge in Morocco as part of the envisioned **Laayoune** bypass;

9 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Our World in Data*. Morocco has fully vaccinated 11% of its population against **Covid-19** and leads **Africa** in the vaccination campaign;

9 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Morocco's ambassador to the **United Kingdom Abdesselam Abouddrar** expresses satisfaction with the cooperation between **London** and **Rabat**, particularly in terms of an upcoming shipping route between the two countries;

9 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. The national council of Morocco's **Association of Cafe and Restaurant Owners** expresses dissatisfaction with the country's decision to introduce a night curfew during Ramadan;

9 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. National airline **Royal Air Maroc** continues flight suspensions as part of preventative measures against **Covid-19** and the detection of the **British** strain in several regions;

8 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Morocco signs a partnership agreement with the **Laprophan** laboratory, through the **Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University of Fez (USMBA)**, to promote biomedical research on medical cannabis;

8 Apr 2021 **Paris (France)** *La Republique En Marche*. President **Emmanuel Macron's La Republique En Marche (LREM)** party announces it will open an office in Morocco's southern city of **Dakhla**;

8 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. The health ministry announces that the **Covax** vaccine facility has supplied Morocco with its first batch of vaccine doses;

8 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *archyde.com*. Moroccan group **Somagec** and the **Djibouti Ports and Free Zones Authority (DPFZA)** announce a contract to construct a storage terminal in the **Damerjog Industrial Park (DDIP)** in **Djibouti**;

8 Apr 2021 **Louta Commune (Morocco)** *North Africa Post*. **Louta commune** president **Mekki El Hannoudi** defies government's decision to maintain night curfew during Ramadan;

8 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Foreign affairs minister **Nasser Bourita** holds a virtual meeting with **France's** Europe and foreign affairs minister **Jean-Eve Ludrian** as part of ongoing dialogue between Morocco and France;

8 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *North Africa Post*. Morocco sends a high profile delegation to meet with members of the **Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CENSAD)** in **Abuja (Nigeria)** to discuss counterterrorism strategies;

8 Apr 2021 **Western Sahara (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Morocco's military kills **Polisario** commander **Addah Al-Bendir**, reportedly by a drone strike, while he was allegedly leading an attempted raid on positions along Morocco's sand wall;

8 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Government extends the country's state of emergency until 10 May;

7 Apr 2021 **Souss-Massa (Morocco)** *Maroc*. The regional chamber of commerce, industry, and services of the **Souss-Massa** region signs a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with **South Africa's** chamber of commerce and industry of the **Cape Province** for sectoral cooperation;

7 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Morocco's investments in the rest of **Africa** increased from MAD 907 million (\$100m) in 2007 to MAD 5.4 billion (nearly \$700m) in 2019;

7 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. **China** will supply Morocco with 10 million doses of the **Sinopharm** vaccines in April and May 2021;

7 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. 2021 **Global Gender Gap Report** ranks Morocco 144th globally in gender equality;

7 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *The Sowetan*. The government announces that it will adopt a night curfew during the holy month of Ramadan;

6 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Local police respond with violent intervention as contractual teachers protest in the streets of Rabat against disproportionate salaries;

6 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Diplomatie*. Morocco and **Colombia's** foreign ministers sign several bilateral cooperation agreements and memoranda of understanding (MoU) to strengthen their revived, South-South cooperation-based friendship;

6 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Morocco's economy recovered by 0.7% in the first quarter of 2021 after a year of deterioration congruent with global economic trends due to the impact of **Covid-19**;

4 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco Shafaqna*. The **Renault** group appoints **Mohamed Bennani** as the managing director in Morocco as part of reorganisation of the brand;

6 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco Shafaqna*. **Royal Air Maroc** announces that it will cease to follow the daylight savings schedule and will return to Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) on 11 April at 3am;

6 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Algerian news outlet **Ennahar Online** reports that an Algerian delegation withdrew from a virtual event in protest against a map that featured Morocco's undivided map;

6 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Morocco's **Covid-19** monitoring committee detects cases of the **British** variant in seven regions across the country;

5 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *International Renewable Energy Agency*. **International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)** says Morocco's renewable energy capacities exceeded forecasts in 2020 despite **Covid-19**;

5 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Culture minister **Othman El Ferdaous** says Morocco has launched a project to include collective granaries, called **Igudar**, to **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO)** list of world heritage sites;

5 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. The ministry of industry, trade, and digital technologies, the **Digital Development Agency (DDA)**, the **Euro-Mediterranean University of Fez (UEMF)**, and the **Fez Smart Factory** have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to implement and advance the state of automation in Morocco;

5 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Cafe owners throughout Morocco plan to close for 24 hours in response to potential pandemic restrictions during Ramadan;

5 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco Shafaqna*. Foreign affairs minister **Nasser Bourita** says **Algeria** is a main party to the **Western Sahara** conflict, and that the decades-long political gridlock can only come to an end if **Algiers** "assumes its responsibility" and participates fully in **United Nations**-led negotiations;

5 Apr 2021 **Dakhla (Morocco)** *Map News*. Foreign affairs minister **Nasser Bourita** signs several cooperation agreements with his **Senegalese** counterpart, **Aissata Tall Sall**;

5 Apr 2021 **Dakhla (Morocco)** *Map News*. **Senegal** officially opens its consulate general in the city of **Dakhla**, southern Morocco;

4 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. **Amar Saadani**, the former secretary-general of **Algeria's** ruling party, the **Front de libération nationale (FLN)**, has reportedly requested political asylum in Morocco;

4 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. King **Mohammed VI** assures King **Abdullah II** of **Jordan** of Morocco's full support for the stability and security in Jordan;

4 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Diplomatie*. The foreign affairs ministry expresses full support for King **Abdullah II** of **Jordan** and his decisions to ensure his country's stability and security;

4 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. The **Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)** has approved the Moroccan government's request to postpone the implementation of a banking data exchange agreement it signed as part of an OECD programme;

- 3 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Morocco's **National Center for Scientific and Technical Research** releases a report in which it ranks Morocco as the second-fastest in "digital transformation," in **Africa** placing only behind **South Africa**;
- 3 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. **United States**-based rating agency **Standard & Poor's** downgrades Morocco's local and foreign currency credit rating to 'junk,' from BB+ to BBB-;
- 2 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Morocco signs a decentralised cooperation framework agreement with **France** that aims to develop economic, social, and sustainable development in the **Souss-Massa** and **Nouvelle Aquitaine** regions;
- 2 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *World Bank*. The **World Bank** predicts the **Middle East and North Africa (MENA)** region will face \$227 billion in public debt in due to the **Covid-19** pandemic and its economic impact;
- 2 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. **French** embassy in Morocco announces continuation of select "special" flights following Morocco's suspension of flights to France from 31 March;
- 2 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. The **Agence Française de Développement (AFD)** agrees to provide a MAD 16 million (\$1.7m) grant to Morocco's tourism, air transport, handicrafts, and social economy ministry, to reinforce Morocco's **Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE)** framework;
- 1 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Equipment minister **Abdelkader Amara** calls for shared responsibility to address challenges of water management in Morocco;
- 1 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Leconomiste*. **Centrale Automobile Cherifienne (CAC)**, the importer and distributor of the **Volkswagen Group** automobiles in Morocco, has secured exclusive import rights for **Seat** vehicles;
- 1 Apr 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. The government is reportedly contemplating more restrictive measures against the spread of the **British Covid-19** mutation;
- 31 Mar 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Labour and vocational integration minister **Mohamed Amekraz** reiterates Morocco's commitment to the **International Labor Organization (ILO)**-sponsored International Year for the Elimination of Child Labor;
- 31 Mar 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco Shafaqna*. King **Mohammed VI** renews Morocco's support for a political solution in **Libya**;
- 31 Mar 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. **United States** special presidential envoy for climate **John Kerry** expresses satisfaction with Morocco's approach against climate change;
- 30 Mar 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *TDB Group*. Morocco's **OCP Group** and the **Eastern and Southern African Trade and Development Bank (TDB)** have completed the first ever large-scale intra-African transaction using blockchain;
- 30 Mar 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Foreign affairs minister **Nasser Bourita**, holds talks with his **Belgian** counterpart, **Sophie Wilmes**;
- 30 Mar 2021 **Durban (South Africa)** *Association of Citrus Producers of South Africa*. According to the **Association of Citrus Producers of South Africa (CGA)**, Morocco has become the third largest exporter of mandarins globally;
- 29 Mar 2021 **Paris (France)** *Map News*. **French** senator **Claude Kern** says "it is high time" that France and the **European Union (EU)** support Morocco in its position regarding **Western Sahara**;
- 29 Mar 2021 **Washington (United States)** *United States State Department*. **United States**

secretary of state **Anthony Blinken** urges the **United Nations (UN)** to speed up the process of appointing a new envoy for **Western Sahara**;

29 Mar 2021 **Dakhla (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Security services announce a three-day lockdown in the city of **Dakhla**, southern Morocco, after detection of 40 cases of the new **Covid-19** strain;

29 Mar 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. The **Moroccan Association of Exporters (ASMEX)** signs a new agreement to help Moroccan exporters achieve decarbonization with the **Bureau Veritas Maroc (BVM)**, the provider of testing, inspection, and certification services;

29 Mar 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Government extends night curfew by two weeks as part of state of emergency measures;

29 Mar 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *United States Embassy & Consulates in Morocco*. Morocco's government has suspended flights with **France** and **Spain** as part of preventive measures to limit the spread of **Covid-19** bringing total flight suspensions to 39;

29 Mar 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. **Enterprise Ireland**, the government agency responsible for supporting Irish businesses, has expressed interest in working with Morocco at different levels, including innovation and trade;

29 Mar 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. House of Representatives adopts a bill to strengthen the National Council on Probity, Prevention and Fight against Corruption (INPPLC);

27 Mar 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Nigeria unveils the **Nigeria-Morocco Business Council**;

27 Mar 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Prime minister **Saad-Eddine El Othmani** warns of possible third **Covid-19** wave in Morocco;

26 Mar 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Agriculture ministry announces that heavy rainfall in the last three months has had a "very positive impact" on Morocco's 2020-21 agricultural season and fruit exports;

26 Mar 2021 **Tendrara (Morocco)** *Morocco Shafaqna*. **Italy**-based gas sector company **Italfliud Geoenergy** has secured rights to design, construct, operate, and maintain a liquefied natural gas plant in **Tendrara**, eastern Morocco;

25 Mar 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. The **Moroccan Federation for Consumer Rights (FMDC)** says Morocco wastes approximately three million tonnes of food every year;

25 Mar 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Our World in Data*. **Our World in Data** statistics show Morocco ranks 25th in terms of daily **Covid-19** vaccine doses administered per 100 people;

25 Mar 2021 **Dublin (Ireland)** *Ryanair*. **Ireland**-based low-cost airline **Ryanair** announces expansion of its fleet in **Marseille (France)**, and launch of seven new air routes, two of which will fly to Morocco's cities of **Tetouan** and **Essaouira** starting in July;

25 Mar 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Morocco's ambassador to **Bahrain** meets with local officials to discuss further cooperation in the field of renewable energy;

25 Mar 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Morocco's tax service dismisses claims that it will soon be bound to automatically share the diaspora's financial records;

25 Mar 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Atalayar*. Morocco inaugurates the first national centre for nuclear science, which is expected to strengthen regional capacities in **Africa** in the field of nuclear sciences and related technologies;

24 Mar 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Haut Commissariat au Plan*. The **High Commission for Planning (HCP)** reports that the **Covid-19** pandemic has worsened social inequality and increased poverty seven-fold in Morocco;

23 Mar 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. **Bank Al-Maghrib (BAM)** (central bank) governor **Abdellatif Jouahri** says Morocco's official reserve assets are expected to reach MAD 310.3 billion (\$34.4 billion) by the end of 2021, which will ensure Morocco's imports of goods and services for six months and 25 days;

23 Mar 2021 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. **Credit Agricole du Maroc (CAM)** signs 21 agreements with various stakeholders from the agricultural sector related to Morocco's Green Generation programme.

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