

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

Morocco Monthly Briefing July 2026

Morocco Summary 31 July 2026

France's prime minister, Sébastien Lecornu, arrives in Rabat on 15 July for a two-day visit aimed at strengthening ties between France and Morocco, which have improved since France announced in 2024 that it backed Morocco's sovereignty claim over the Western Sahara. However, the visit is overshadowed by a media consortium's investigation alleging that Morocco used Pegasus spyware to target French officials, including Lecornu, when relations between the two countries were strained. The African Development Bank (AfDB) approves a \$114m loan to help finance a lithium iron phosphate cathode-to-cell manufacturing plant located in the Rabat Sale-Kenitra Region in Morocco, to be built by China's Gotion High Tech. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) heads of state and Morocco's government sign an agreement approving the Nigeria-Morocco Gas Pipeline (NMGP), a \$25-billion 6,000-km pipeline that will carry gas from Nigeria to Morocco and eventually link to the Maghreb-Europe gas pipeline. The agreement outlines the regulatory and legal guidelines for the project needed for the next phase of the project.

Spyware allegations mar French prime minister's visit

France's prime minister, **Sébastien Lecornu**, [arrived](#) in **Rabat** on 15 July for a two-day visit aimed at strengthening ties between France and **Morocco**, which have improved since France announced in 2024 that it backed Morocco's sovereignty claim over the **Western Sahara**. Lecornu was [accompanied](#) by a high-level delegation of 12 ministers, including economy minister **Roland Lescure**, armed forces minister **Catherine Vaurtin**, foreign minister **Jean-Noël Barrot** and interior minister **Laurent Nuñez**, further highlighting the importance of the visit. The visit [formed](#) part of preparations for a bilateral treaty that France and Morocco intend to sign, which Lecornu highlighted is the first of its kind that France has signed with a non-**European Union (EU)** country.

France's President **Emmanuel Macron** (2017-present) visited Morocco in October 2024, after announcing the decision to recognise Western Sahara, marking a reset in ties between the two countries. Between 2021 and 2023, relations had been strained due to French efforts to improve ties with Morocco's regional rival, **Algeria**, disputes over visa restrictions, judicial cooperation, intelligence sharing and a diplomatic spat over an alleged spying attempt by Morocco.

This trip underscored how serious France is about rebuilding ties, especially as it seeks to regain influence in the region (relations with Algeria remain strained) and wider **Africa**. Morocco has [emerged](#) as a stable, dependable partner in the region. Its location as a gateway from Africa to **Europe** as well as its growing industrial complex make it a key partner, which can both benefit from French investment but also benefit France with its outputs.

During his visit Lecornu met with prime minister **Aziz Akhannouch** and highlighted that France is seeking to deepen energy, security and counterterrorism cooperation. On the energy front, the two countries are considering ways to export renewable energy from Morocco to France, which Lecornu described as one of several projects they are [considering](#) to "further integrate Morocco and France into shared value chains". The countries published a call for expression of interest in the electricity interconnection project on 16 July. Lecornu also noted that the two countries are preparing a comprehensive security agreement. Nuñez [met](#) with his Moroccan counterpart, **Abdelouafi Laftit**, to discuss security and migration issues, including the extradition of a French/Moroccan citizen who is a suspect in a murder case in France, but was arrested in Morocco.

However, the visit was [overshadowed](#) after a media consortium, **Forbidden Stories**, on 16 July published new allegations that Morocco has used **Pegasus** spyware to target French officials, including Lecornu when he was minister for France's local authorities, during the period when tensions between the two countries were high. Lecornu and Akhannouch were set to hold a press conference after their meeting on 16 July but instead opted to make brief statements with no questions allowed. Morocco officially denied the allegations and has asked for evidence, as it did when the initial allegations were made in 2021. The consortium's investigation also found that France considered acquiring the spyware but Macron in 2020 ruled against buying the **Israeli** technology.

France has not commented on the allegations so it remains unclear if they will impact the outcomes of the visit. Given the gains for France from the relationship and the work already done to rebuild ties, it is possible that they will overlook the allegations. The bilateral treaty between Morocco and France is set to be signed during a visit by King **Mohamed VI** (1999-present) to France on a yet-to-be announced date.

AfDB approves funding to develop gigafactory in Morocco

The **African Development Bank (AfDB)** on 24 July [announced](#) that it had approved a \$114m loan to help finance a lithium iron phosphate cathode-to-cell manufacturing plant located in the **Rabat Sale-Kenitra Region** in Morocco, to be built by **China's Gotion High-Tech**. In addition to its commitments, the AfDB confirmed plans to help raise an additional \$162m from financial partners. The factory will be the first of its kind on the continent and requires an initial investment of \$1.3 billion. The factory will produce lithium iron phosphate batteries, cathodes and anodes, needed for electric vehicles (EVs) for export to Europe, creating a battery value chain. Under the first phase, it will produce 10 gigawatt-hours (GWh) of battery cells and packs for EVs, but eventually these will be ramped up to 100GWh.

Morocco's proximity to Europe as well as its strong automotive industry – the largest in Africa – made it a logical choice for the location of this factory. Morocco [produced](#) one million vehicles by December 2025, a 79% increase from the 559,645 it produced in 2024. The exchange office noted in June that the automotive industry had [generated](#) \$6.3 billion in export revenues during the first four months of 2026 alone, an 18.6% increase compared to the same period in 2025.

Morocco's government has shown strong support for the project, with an investment agreement signed in June 2025. The project is in a free trade zone in Rabat Sale-Kenitra, which provides exemptions from import/export duties and VAT, as well as a five-year corporate tax exemption. The project will help to strengthen Morocco's position as an EV manufacturing hub, which will further bolster its automotive sector. During his speech on **Throne Day**, marking the 27th anniversary of his accession to the throne, King Mohammed VI [highlighted](#) that the automotive manufacturing industry, alongside aerospace, renewable energy and food processing, are key pillars in the economy that have helped to drive economic growth, which reached 4.9% in 2025.

Gotion High Tech's role as project developer is reflective of increased Chinese investment in Morocco. Industry and trade minister **Ryad Mezzour** [noted](#) in an interview published on 12 June that China has asked Morocco to sign a free trade agreement, with authorities currently weighing whether closer economic relations with the **Asian** powerhouse will benefit the local export-oriented manufacturing sector (*see ARC Briefing Morocco Jun 2026*).

EOCOWAS approves the Nigeria-Morocco gas pipeline

The **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)** heads of state and government on 19 July [signed](#) an agreement approving the **Nigeria-Morocco Gas Pipeline (NMGP)**, a \$25-billion 6,000-km pipeline that will carry gas from **Nigeria** to Morocco and eventually link to the **Maghreb-Europe** gas pipeline. The agreement outlines the regulatory and legal guidelines for the project needed for the next phase of the project, and provides that the NMGP governance body will sit in **Abuja** (Nigeria). The pipeline will run through 13 coastal **West African** countries and connect the region to **North Africa** and Europe.

The project now needs a project company based in **Casablanca** to oversee construction, financing and commercial agreements. The project company is [expected](#) to be established by the end of 2026 or early 2027 and gas exports are expected in 2031. Financing will be a key aspect of the project company's responsibilities as the project still requires investors and a final investment decision (FID). Notably, Morocco's ambassador to the US, **Youssef Amrani**, [confirmed](#) that Morocco is in early-stage talks with the US **Export-Import Bank** over financing for the pipeline.

Gas from the pipeline will be a much cheaper and more accessible alternative for Morocco. In October 2021, political tensions with Algeria over Western Sahara resulted in Algeria closing the **Maghreb-Europe** gas pipeline (see *ARC Briefing Algeria Nov 2021*). This pipeline was a key source of energy for both Morocco and **Spain**. The closure of this pipeline has spurred greater movement on the NMGP.

The ECOWAS agreement is a key step in driving the project forward as it helps to outline the necessary common legal framework. **Office National des Hydrocarbures et des Mines (ONHYM)** (national office of hydrocarbons and mines) director general **Amina Benkhadra** told the [media](#) that the signing of the agreement comes after a long consultation process on the harmonisation of rules on governance, taxation, regulatory stability, investment protection and cross-border cooperation. Benkhadra also noted that the pipeline will serve as a regional network and connect future gas exporters – **Mauritania**, **Senegal** and potentially **Côte d'Ivoire** – to an export transport network.

Planner

23 Sep 2026 (**Morocco**) Parliamentary elections;
 2026 (**Morocco**) King **Mohammed VI** expected to make a state visit to **France**;
 2026 **Nador (Morocco)** **Nador West Med** port expected to open

Chronology

28 Jul 2026 **Laayoune (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. **United States (US)** ambassador **Duke Buchan** visits Laayoune to meet local officials and explore opportunities to expand US-Morocco economic cooperation, with discussions focusing on investment in renewable energy, fisheries, logistics, tourism and infrastructure;

27 Jul 2026 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. **United States (US)** President **Donald Trump** thanks King **Mohammed VI** after Morocco names the 1,055-km **Tiznit-Dakhla Expressway** the **Donald J. Trump Expressway**, describing the gesture as a "great honour";

23 Jul 2026 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Vision Guinee*. **Benin** reaffirms its support for Morocco's sovereignty over the **Western Sahara** during the seventh session of their **Joint Cooperation Commission**, endorsing Morocco's autonomy initiative as the basis for resolving the dispute;

22 Jul 2026 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Morocco and **Ghana** agree to deepen economic and investment cooperation by expanding private sector partnerships, increasing two-way investment flows and focusing on priority sectors such as green energy, logistics, digital economy, mining and agriculture;

21 Jul 2026 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Morocco and **Benin** reaffirm their close bilateral partnership during the seventh session of their **Joint Cooperation Commission**, agreeing to expand cooperation in trade, investment, security, agriculture, education and digital development;

20 Jul 2026 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. **Bank Al-Maghrib** (central bank) governor **Abdellatif Jouahri** presents his 2025 annual report to King **Mohammed VI**, highlighting that the economy expanded by 4.9% in 2025, primarily due to strong investment;

18 Jul 2026 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. **Moroccan National Tourism Office (MNTTO)** launches a promotional campaign in **Hong Kong** to capture affluent travellers, aiming to increase annual **Chinese** visitor numbers to one million by the next decade;

16 Jul 2026 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. King **Mohammed VI** hosts **French** prime minister **Sébastien Lecornu** in Rabat following the 15th **Morocco-France High-Level Meeting**, where both sides reaffirmed their strengthened strategic partnership and discussed closer cooperation on security, diplomacy, and **Africa** ahead of the King's planned state visit to France;

15 Jul 2026 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Morocco signs an agreement to participate in the **International Stabilization Force (ISF)** in **Gaza**, committing senior military officers, **Royal Gendarmerie** and police personnel, as well as a military field hospital, as part of its role as a founding member of the **Gaza Peace Council**;

13 Jul 2026 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Morocco's ambassador to **Côte d'Ivoire**, **Othman El Ferdaous**, urges Moroccan enterprises to expand aggressively into **West Africa** through "co-industrialisation" partnerships tied to Côte d'Ivoire's **2026–2030 National Development Plan**;

11 Jul 2026 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. Morocco is one of nine countries to vote against reopening a **United Nations (UN) General Assembly** debate on lifting the long-standing **United States (US)** embargo on **Cuba**, a position influenced by Cuba's continued support for the **Polisario Front** in the **Western Sahara** dispute;

8 Jul 2026 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. **Japan** and Morocco agree to deepen cooperation on food security and phosphate fertiliser supplies through collaboration with **Casablanca** (Morocco)-headquartered **OCP Group**;

7 Jul 2026 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. **Saudi Arabia**, **Bahrain** and **Oman** strongly condemn the recently foiled terrorist plots in Morocco, expressing full solidarity and praising the efficiency of Moroccan security forces in dismantling an **ISIS**-linked cell;

6 Jul 2026 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Reuters*. Counterterrorism agency **Bureau central d'investigations judiciaires (BCIJ)** announces that it has foiled a plot targeting sensitive national sites by arresting ten suspects loyal to the **Islamic State's Sahel** affiliate across several cities;

29 Jun 2026 **Rabat (Morocco)** *Morocco World News*. The **High Commission for Planning (HCP)** reports that the economy expanded by 4.6% in the first quarter of 2026, driven primarily by a robust 18.4% recovery in the agricultural sector and strong domestic demand;

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