

INDIA-MOROCCO BILATERAL RELATIONS

October 23, 2023

1. POLITICAL

1.1 Introduction

Relations between India and Morocco go back to the 14th century when the famous traveller and writer from Tangier, Ibn Batuta, travelled to India. In modern history, India was active in the UN supporting the Moroccan freedom movement and recognised Morocco on 20 June 1956 immediately after its independence. Diplomatic relations were established in 1957. Over the years, India and Morocco have enjoyed cordial and friendly relations.

Desire to build an intensive interaction culminated in the first landmark visit of our Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee to Morocco in February 1999 followed by the visit of Moroccan PM Mr. Abderrehman Youssoufi to India in February 2000. After ascending to the throne, King Mohammed VI chose India for his first visit to an Asian country in 2001. Relations have been further intensified since the meeting of King Mohammed VI with Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on 29 October 2015 on the sidelines of the third India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS-III) in New Delhi. It is reflected in around 25 Ministerial visits and interactions since October 2015 and signing of more than 40 MoUs/Agreements in the areas including counter-terrorism, cyber security, space, agriculture, vocational training etc.

1.2 High level visits from Indian Side

- Vice President Dr. Zakir Hussain in 1967, Vice President Shri K R Narayanan in 1993 and Vice President Shri. Mohammad Hamid Ansari from 30 May to 02 June 2016
- Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited Morocco in 1999, which was the first ever Prime Ministerial visit to Morocco
- External Affairs Ministers Shri Salman Khurshid visited Morocco in 2014.
- External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj visited Morocco on 17-18 February 2019.
- Other important Ministerial visits include: Dr. Sanjeev Kumar Balyan, Minister of State for Agriculture from 5-8 July 2015, as Special Envoy of the Prime Minister for IAFS-III; Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Commerce and Industry from 25 - 26 May 2017 for the 5th JCM; Shri Suresh Prabhu, Hon'ble Minister of Commerce and Industry from 09-10 October 2017 to participate in WTO Conference and Shri P. P. Chaudhary, Minister of State (Law and Justice and Corporate Affairs), from 01-05 April 2018 to participate in the International Justice Conference.

- External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar had virtual meeting with Foreign Minister of Morocco Mr. Nasser Bourita on October 22, 2020 during which they discussed a range of bilateral and multilateral issues.
- Shri R. K. Singh, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Power, New & Renewable Energy of India and Mr. Aziz Rabbah, Minister of Energy, Mines and Environment of Morocco addressed the inaugural session of the first edition of the Arab-India Energy Forum held in a virtual format on 8-9 June 2021 under the co-chairship of India and Morocco.
- Shri Mansukh Mandaviya, Minister of State for Chemical and Fertilizers of India had a virtual meeting with Mr. Aziz Rabbah, Minister of Energy, Mines and Environment of Morocco on July 19, 2021 to discuss bilateral issues of mutual interest.
- Shri Bhupender Yadav, Minister of Labour and Employment met Mr. Younes Sekkouri, Minister of Economic Inclusion, Small Business, Employment and Skills (MME) of Kingdom of Morocco on 9 June, 2022 on the sidelines of 110th session of the International Labour Conference held in Geneva.
- Dr. Jitendra Singh, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for the Ministry of Science and Technology and Minister of State (Independent Charge) Ministry of Earth science and Minister of State for Prime Minister's Office; Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions; Department of Atomic Energy and Department of Space, met with Prof. Mohammed Sadiki, Minister of Agriculture, Maritime Fisheries, Rural Development and Water and Forests of Kingdom of Morocco on 27 June, 2022 on the sidelines of the UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon, Portugal.
- Shri Girish Chandra Murmu, Comptroller and Auditor General of India led an Indian delegation for bilateral visit to Morocco on 15-18 September. He met Ms. Zineb El Adaoui, First President, Court of Accounts of Morocco and the two signed an MoU on Cooperation between the Supreme Audit Institutions of the two countries.
- External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar and Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates of Morocco met on the sidelines of the 77th session of United Nations General Assembly in New York on 24 September, 2022.
- Secretary (CPV & OIA) Dr. Ausaf Sayeed paid an official visit to the Kingdom of Morocco from 22-25 November, 2022. During the visit, Secretary (CPV&OIA) represented India at the 9th Global Forum of the UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) held in Fez on 22-23 November, 2022. In Rabat, Secretary (CPV&OIA) called on H.E. Ms. Leila Benali, Minister of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development of the Kingdom of Morocco and discussed cooperation in the sectors of fertilizers, renewable energy, climate change etc. between the two countries. He also co-chaired the 5th round of India-Morocco Foreign Office Consultations during which a wide range of bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest were discussed. Secretary (CPV&OIA) also interacted with the Indian community, Indian business leaders and ITEC Alumni from Morocco. The visit provided further impetus to the bilateral friendly relations between the two countries.

- Minister for Chemicals & Fertilizers, Health & Family Welfare Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya met Head of Government of Kingdom of Morocco Mr. Aziz Akhannouch at World Economic Forum, Davos on 19 January, 2023.
- Minister for Chemicals & Fertilizers, Health & Family Welfare Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya visited Morocco from 20-22 January, 2023. He met Chairman & CEO of OCP Dr. Mostafa Terrab and Morocco's Minister of Health and Social Protection Mr. Khalid Ait Taleb during the visit. Three MoUs were signed between OCP and Indian Fertilizer companies under which OCP will supply India with up to 1.7 million metric tons (MT) of phosphate fertilizers in one year. Hon'ble Minister also visited Integrated Phosphatic Fertilizer Complex of OCP at Jorf Lasfar and the Indo Maroc Phosphore SA (IMACID) plant, a Joint Venture of OCP Morocco & Indian companies.
- A delegation led by Shri Ghanshyam Tiwari, Member of Parliament visited Morocco to attend the Parliamentary Conference on 'Interfaith Dialogue: Working together for our common future' held in Marrakesh from 13th to 15th June, 2023.
- Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs of India H.E Nirmala Sitharaman visited Morocco to participate in the IMF-World Bank meetings held in Marrakech from 9-16 October, 2023. She also co-chaired the fourth Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting under G20 India presidency, in Marrakech and also met Minister of Economy and Finance of Morocco H.E Mrs. Nadia Fettah on the sidelines of the IMF-World Bank meetings.

1.3 High level visits from Moroccan Side

- King Mohammed VI paid official visits to India in 2001 and again in 2015 to participate in the India Africa Forum Summit-III. King Mohammed VI as Crown Prince in 1983 visited India for NAM Conference.
- Prime Ministerial visits from Morocco include: Mr. Abderrehman Yousoufi in 2000; Mr. Driss Jettou in 2004.
- Other important Ministerial visits include: Dr. Abdelkader Amara, Minister of Energy, Mining, Water & Environment from 20-21 January 2016; Mr. Mohamed Najib Boulif, Minister Delegate incharge of Transport, from 14-16 April 2016; Mr. Noureddine Boutayeb, Minister delegate to Ministry of Interior from 29 October to 06 November 2017; Dr. Abdelkader Amara, Minister of Equipment, Transport, Logistics and Water from 15-21 December 2017; Dr. Jamila El Mossalli, Secretary of State to Minister for Tourism, Air Transport, Handicraft and Social Economy from 02-18 February 2018; Ms. Rakiya Eddarhem, Secretary of State in charge of Foreign Trade, Ministry of Industry, Investment, Trade and Digital Economy from 24-26 February 2018; Mr. Aziz Rabbah, Minister of Energy, Mines and Sustainable Development from 10-12 April 2018; Mr. Mohammed Sajid, Minister of Tourism, Air Transport, Handicrafts and Social Economy, from 16-19 September 2018; Mr. Abdeltif Loudyi, Minister Delegate to the Head of Government in charge of the National Defence Administration from 24-26 September 2018; Mr. Mohamed Auajjar, Minister of Justice from 11-18 November 2018; Prof. Anass Doukkali, Minister of Health from 10-13 December 2018; Mrs. Rakiya Eddarhem, Secretary of State in charge of Foreign Trade, Ministry of Industry, Investment, Trade and Digital Economy from 14-20 January 2019; Mr. Khalid Samadi, Secretary of State for Higher

Education and Scientific Research from 18-22 January 2019; Mr. Moulay Hafid Elalami, Minister of Industry, Investment, Trade and Digital Economy from 17-19 March 2019 and Mr. Mohamed Rehrass, Secretary of State for Vocational Training from 20-25 May 2019. Mr. Mehdi Abdelkrim, MP and Chairman of India-Morocco Parliamentary Friendship Group in Moroccan Upper House and Dr. Abdellatif Assarajm, MP from 14-16 January 2020 visited India.

- Prof. Khalid Ait Taleb, Minister of Health of Morocco, participated virtually in the UBUNTU International Yoga Conference organized by ICCR and Ministry of AYUSH on the occasion of the Seventh International Day of Yoga on 21-22 June, 2021.
- Dr. Ghita Mezzour, Minister Delegate for Digital Transformation, along with a high level delegation, visited India from 27th May till 4th June 2022 during which she met Smt. Meenakshi Lekhi, Minister of State for External Affairs and Culture and Shri Rajeev Chandrashekar, Minister of State for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and Electronics and Information Technology.
- A high level delegation led by Mr. El Abed ALAOUI BOUHAMID, General of the Air Force Division participated in the DefExpo held in Gandhinagar from 18-22 October, 2022.
- A high level delegation led by Mr. MAHOUAR HASSANE, General in the Royal Armed Forces of Kingdom of Morocco to participated in Aero India 2023 held in Bengaluru from 11-19 February, 2023.
- Mr. Mohcine Jazouli, Minister Delegate to the Head of Government for Investment, Convergence, and Evaluation of Public Policies visited India from 4-10 March, 2023 during which he met Shri Mansukh Mandaviya, Hon'ble Minister for Chemicals and Fertilizer, Health and Family Welfare and Shri Piyush Goyal, Commerce and Industry Minister.
- A delegation led by Ms. Zineb El Adaoui, First President, Court of Accounts of Morocco visited India to attend the SAI20 Summit held in Goa from 12-14 June, 2023 upon invitation of Shri Girish Chandra Murmu, Comptroller and Auditor General of India.

1.4 Institutional Mechanisms

- (i) **Joint Commission Meetings:** On 20 March 2019, the VI India Morocco Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) was held in New Delhi under the co-chairmanship of Shri Suresh Prabhu, Minister of Commerce.
- (ii) **Foreign Office Consultations:** The V India-Morocco Foreign Office Consultations (FOCs) were held in Rabat on 24-25 November 2022 co-chaired by Secretary (CPV & OIA), Ministry of External Affairs during which a wide range of bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest were discussed.
- (iii) **Joint Working Groups:** Joint Working Groups on various subjects of mutual interest have been formed and meet regularly. The first meeting of the India-Morocco JWG on Counter Terrorism was held in Rabat on 29 December, 2022. 2nd meeting of India-Morocco JWG on Health was held in virtual mode on 12 Jan 2023 and the Second meeting of JWG on

Renewable Energy was held on 24 January 2023. The Second meeting of the Joint Committee under the Memorandum of Understanding of Mining and Geology between India and Morocco was held on 2 February, 2021. Third India-Morocco JWG on Water Resources was held on July 6, 2021. The first meeting of JWG on Fertilisers was held on March 10, 2023 in virtual format.

2. ECONOMIC & COMMERCIAL

2.1 Introduction : Bilateral trade between India and Morocco touched USD 3.6 billion in 2022-23 compared to USD 3.2 billion in 2021-22, USD 1.9 billion in 2020-21 and USD 1.75 billion in 2019-20. Exports from India also registered a growth of over 105% in the last two years. Morocco is a top destination for new products from India like mobile phones, petroleum products and honey. Other major items of India's exports to Morocco are autoparts, electronics, textiles, engineering goods, chemicals and specialty chemicals, plastics and spices. Main items of Moroccan exports to India are phosphoric acid, phosphate, metallic ores and metal spray and inorganic chemicals.

(ii) **Bilateral trade between India and Morocco** (in million US\$):

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
India's Export	432.32	680.06	799.45	507.62	962.28	1,047.15
India's Import	779.63	1326.69	952.54	1436.82	2244.19	2,549.44
Total	1211.95	2006.76	1751.99	1944.44	3206.47	3596.59

(Source : Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India)

(iii) A number of Indian companies have presence in Morocco like IMACID (a Birla-Tata joint Venture with OCP-Office Cherifien de Phosphates, Morocco), Sunpharma, CIPLA, Varun Beverages (PEPSI), Tata Motors, Sterling and Wilson, Larsen and Toubro, Sumilon, Furnace Fabrica, Satguru Travels, Gujarat Fluorochemicals Ltd. (GFL), Indore (Optic Fibre), Tejas Network. Varroc Lighting Systems India Pvt. Ltd., Motherson Sumi and the Oberoi Hotel Group. Mahindra & Mahindra, Ashok Leyland, Shakti Pump, Fieldking, Kirloskar, etc are present through their local representatives in Morocco. Several heavy equipment companies like Bharat Forge, KEC also have presence in the local market. Tata Motors and Mahindra are also getting acceptance in the local automobile market. Samta Group is the latest entrant in the mining sector. Most recently, HCL has set up their full fledged centre in Technopolis Rabat.

2.2 Information Technology: Centre of Excellence in Information Technology has been set up in Technopark, Casablanca under IAFS-II development programme. CEIT has imparted

training to 675 Moroccan students/professionals till date. As per the MoU, the CEIT was handed over to the Moroccan side in January 2020.

(ii) More than 25 Indian companies and start-ups participated in the prestigious Tech & Start-up event Gitex Africa hosted by Morocco which took place from May 31 to June 2, 2023 in Marrakesh.

2.3 Agriculture: The Work Plan for 2018-2020 between Indian Council of Agricultural Research, India and Ministry of Agriculture, Marine Fisheries, Rural Development and Water and Forests of Government of Morocco under the MoU on Cooperation in the field of Agricultural Research and Education on Agricultural Cooperation was signed on 04 May 2018. Scientists from India and Morocco have visited each other's countries under the work plan.

(ii) 15th Edition of SIAM (International Agriculture Fair) in Meknes also witnessed participation of Indian companies in the agri sector. There exists a lot of opportunities in this important sector for enhancing bilateral cooperation between both countries.

2.4 Renewable Energy: There is increasing cooperation between India and Morocco in the field of renewable energy. At the CII-EXIM Bank Conclave on India-Africa Growth Partnership, an MoU was signed on 20 July, 2022 between NTPC and Moroccan renewable energy agency MASEN to work together in the renewable energy sector. The Second meeting of JWG on Renewable Energy was held on 24 January 2023.

2.5 International Year of Millets 2023: The Embassy of India in the Kingdom of Morocco organised month long events in Rabat and Marrakech to mark International Year of Millets 2023. A poster exhibition, display of various millets and millet based food festival were organized in Marrakech in the presence of a large number of local dignitaries, diplomats and media personnel gathered. The event was also supported by Federation de La Millorette, which is also engaged in promotion of millet based foods.

3. CULTURAL RELATIONS

3.1 Introduction

There is an abiding interest in Morocco for Indian art and culture. Hindi films are very popular in Morocco and Moroccan TV regularly telecasts Indian feature film every week. A Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) between India and Morocco for the years 2016-19 was signed on 31 May 2016. In the last few years, artists representing the diverse facets of Indian classical music and dance have visited Morocco under the Cultural Exchange Programme. Conversely, Moroccan calligraphy artists went to New Delhi, Jaipur and Bhopal to exhibit Moroccan calligraphy, renowned Moroccan singer Mr. Aziz Ozouss and his group represented Morocco in the 8th International Jazz Festival in New Delhi and 8 member cultural troupe 'Abidat Rma' participated in the 6th International Folk Music and Dance Competition in New Delhi from 01-08 December 2019. ICCR sponsored Kathak and Sitar groups participated in the Fez Festival of Sufi Culture from 22-27 October, 2022.

3.2 Cultural Events

(i) The Embassy in collaboration with Association Nationale d'Amitie Maroco-Asiatique (ANAMA), a cultural group in Casablanca organises Holi every year since 2016. Events such as Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas, India Day, Festival of India, Namaste India (in association with local cultural institutions) National Unity Day etc are regularly organized by the Embassy. The Embassy has been organising the celebrations of International Yoga Day every year from 2014.

(ii) To celebrate Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, Mission has been interacting with all stakeholders to carry out a number of programmes. Mission has conducted a number of programmes to celebrate International Day of Yoga 2021, Independence Day and ITEC Day 2021. On the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti on Oct 2, 2021, Ambassador visited Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane and paid floral tributes to Mahatma Gandhi's bust located in the university, planted a sapling and engaged with the academia. 8th International Day of Yoga was celebrated at the UNESCO World Heritage site and iconic location of Kasbah des Oudayas and the event was telecast on Doordarshan as part of Guardian Ring of Yoga. 9th International Day of Yoga was celebrated on a grand scale in the landmark Hassan-II Parc, Rabat which saw participation of more than 200 people from various walks of life. Other successful programmes across various cities of Rabat, Casablanca, Kenitra, Marrakech and Tangier were also organised in Morocco.

4. TRAINING & CAPACITY BUILDING: ITEC courses are extremely popular in Morocco. Till date, a total of 779 Moroccan nationals have attended ITEC courses with record number of 264 participants from Morocco in 2022-23. Special ITEC courses have also been organised for Moroccan participants on subjects covering deep learning, cyber security, water resource management etc. Morocco has been allotted 4 scholarship slots under ICCR Africa Scholarship Schemes. Further, diplomats from Morocco regularly attend PCFD courses at SSIFS, New Delhi. A Special training of two weeks at SSIFS for 16 Moroccan diplomats was organized from 15-27 April 2019. Representatives from the Government of Morocco also actively participate in various capacity building programmes under IAFS-III. In 2021, 4 students from Morocco were accepted to study Hindi at Kendriya Hindi Sansthan Agra under the Promotion of Hindi Language Abroad Scheme.

5. VISIT of NAVAL SHIPS: Indian Naval Ships have been visiting Morocco regularly for goodwill visits. Indian Naval Ship Sumedha and Royal Moroccan Naval Ship L C Arrahmani (501) conducted a Maritime Partnership Exercise (MPX) on September 25, 2023. Last year, INS Tarkash conducted a Maritime Patrol Exercise(MPX) with Royal Moroccan Naval Ship Hassan-II on July 26, 2022, off Port Casablanca. The exercise was aimed at strengthening maritime ties & enhancing inter-operability between the two Navies. Earlier, INS Tarkash had visited Casablanca and Tangier Port in 2017 and 2019. INS Tabar visited Casablanca for a technical port call in August 2021. During the visit, INS Tabar carried out PASSEX exercise with Royal Moroccan Navy.

6. CO-OPERATION TO COMBAT COVID-19: Morocco was one of the first countries to procure Covishield from Serum Institute of India (SII), with SII supplying a total of 7 million doses of Covishield to Morocco. India also supplied large quantities of medicines to Morocco to combat COVID-19 pandemic.

7. INDIAN COMMUNITY: Indian community in Morocco numbers around 400-450. Many of them are engaged in businesses and are based in the city of Casablanca, the commercial and trade hub of Morocco. Indian community also comprises of Indian professionals working with Indian companies and multinationals based in Morocco.

8. USEFUL RESOURCES

- (i) Website: www.indianembassy rabat.gov.in
- (ii) Twitter: @indembrabat
- (iii) Facebook: IndiaInMorocco (Embassy of India, Rabat)
