

Lula and King Mohammed VI Have Big Plans for Brazil and Morocco

Contributed by Isaura Daniel
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Brazil's President, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, said Friday, November 26, during the meeting with the king of Morocco, Mohammed VI, in Brasília, that the monarch's visit opens great opportunities of exchange and cooperation between the two countries.

"The presence of many businessmen in your committee demonstrates the determination to explore the possibilities for bilateral exchange," said Lula.

The President promised that soon a business mission will travel to Morocco and said he hopes that, in the next business trips between the two countries, there will already be a direct aerial connection. There has already been a direct flight between Brazil and Morocco, but it was cancelled.

Lula and king Mohammed VI signed at the end of the morning the framework agreement to mark the beginning of negotiations for a tariff preference treaty between the African country and the Mercosur, a customs union between Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay.

Brazil currently occupies the rotating presidency of the South American bloc. "Our trade exchange will be strengthened when we count on a free trade zone between the Mercosur and Morocco," said Lula.

After signing the trade preference agreement, the next step is a free trade treaty.

King Mohammed VI, in his speech, also emphasised the Moroccan determination to widen the cooperation with the South Americans and Brazilians and remembered that his country was the first, amongst the African countries, to establish diplomatic relations with Brazil, back in 1884.

"The Kingdom of Morocco, under Sultan Moulay Slimane, was also the first country to recognize Brazil's independence," he said.

Mohammed VI congratulated President Lula for the proposal of the creation of a world fund against hunger and for the initiative in hosting the summit for the Arab and South American countries, which will take place in May next year.

In March 2005, in Morocco, a meeting with the foreign relations ministers in preparation for the summit will take place.

"I am keen to see that the summit's preparatory meeting marks a decisive step in the ongoing effort to strengthen relations between the two parties and to make South-South cooperation a more tangible reality."

The king said that in the same way his country made of the Maghreb Union a strategic choice, he will not spare efforts for the success of the South-South relations.

"The cooperation agenda between Brazil and Morocco covers central themes to surpass the challenges faced by the countries in the South. We will continue working together so that multilateral claims are more representative of the new economic and political international geography," added Lula.

Security Council

Both Mohammed VI and Lula spoke of the necessity that the developing countries have for a greater participation in the

Security Council at the United Nations Organisation (UN).

Lula reaffirmed his position that countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America should occupy permanent seats in the council.

Lula recalled he defended such thesis in the organization's last General Assembly. "Brazil, as well as that, sees with good eyes the possibility of an African country and an Arab country as permanent members," he said.

Mohammed VI, in his turn, defended the reform in the UN system and, as Lula, the enlargement of the Security Council.

"We aspire the application of a fairer new world multilateralism, more balanced and more understanding. To do it, it is necessary to work on a reform of the UN system," he said.

Tourism and Diplomacy

As well as signing the framework agreement, Lula and Mohammed VI also signed cooperation agreements in the diplomatic formation area and in the tourism sector.

One of the agreements foresees regular exchange between the Rio Branco Institute, responsible the formation of diplomats in Brazil, and the Royal Moroccan Academy of Diplomacy, which performs the same function in the Arab country.

The agreement foresees the organization of seminars together, experience exchange between researchers of the two institutions, as well as information and publications exchange. The agreement is valid for three years.

In the tourism sector, the two governments have agreed to encourage the increase in the flow of Brazilian tourists in Morocco and Moroccan tourists in Brazil, simplifying the formalities requested from tourists.

A Morocco-Brazil tourism committee will also be created with government representatives of both countries. The group will have periodic meetings to study reciprocal investments and cooperation.

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