

Weekly highlights by L'ECONOMISTE

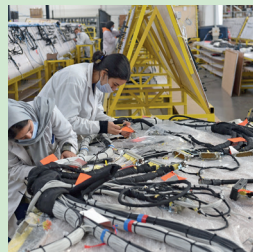


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EDITORIAL

Hostage

Mohamed Ali MRABI

AFRICA is no longer a colonized continent! This is why Africa must trust Africa. The words of the Sovereign during the Moroccan-Ivorian forum, in 2014, in Abidjan, find their full meaning with the profound geopolitical changes underway. "There is no longer any land given for granted, any more than there is a private preserve". It is this very clear message that has not been assimilated by some former colonial powers. These are still unable to get rid of a certain "paternalistic" attitude in relations with African states, but recent events such as the Covid crisis, the stalemate in armed confrontations in Ukraine, or the disruption of supply chains herald a paradigm shift in the relationships between nations. After a cycle of "happy globalization", based on the abundance of resources, the complementarity of value chains, and free trade, the concept of sovereignty

is coming back at a gallop. It is urgent to reduce reliance on the outside world in areas considered strategic, such as energy, food, and technology. The entry into play of new players on the continent worries some former colonial powers. Their interests in Africa, long taken for granted, now seem threatened. Some see it as a real "demotion" of the status of former colonial powers, especially with the rise of a feeling of distrust towards them in different countries of the continent, hence the importance of the Moroccan doctrine, based on the diversification of partnerships, in a logic of equals, articulated around of co-development projects, because Africa must not remain hostage to its past. However, it should be kept in mind that the loss of influence of the former colonizers is not enough, on its own, to consolidate sovereignty. □

Weekly highlights

Low female activity rate How to reverse the trend

“WOMEN deserve more. Their empowerment is the empowerment of all of society”. This is the call launched by the Nigerian female entrepreneur Yetunde Adeyemi, during the meeting organized by the World Bank, around women empowerment. On Tuesday in the city of Benguerir, in the Marrakech area. This is the first meeting in a cycle of conferences in anticipation of the World Bank annual meetings scheduled for this year in Marrakech. For Hicham El Habti, president of the Mohammed VI Polytechnic University, which hosted this event, *“gender equality is a permanent action”*. This must start at school, according to the various stakeholders. Hicham El Habti, recalled that in Africa, *“40% of girls reach secondary school. Only half make it to the end of the course”*, hence the importance of deploying dedicated strategies to promote women’s empowerment and the consecration of gender equality, said for her part Nadia Fettah, Minister of Finance, for whom this equality must involve different aspects, in particular in terms of access to education, health care, the economy, and other aspects.



For Axel Van Trotsenburg, World Bank Managing Director of Operations, *“if women worked as much as men, this would result in a 20% increase in GDP per capita”*, hence the call to fight against the obstacles to their access to employment

Nadia Fettah highlighted the launch in Morocco of the Tamkine (Empowerment) program, aimed in particular at ensuring better inclusion of women. The National Initiative for Human Development (INDH) has also played an important role in this regard, according to the Minister, in particular by promoting the reduction of poverty and exclusion, through the strengthening of women’s capacities and their inclusion through income-generating activities. Nadia Fettah insisted on a series of focus areas that will allow

better economic and social integration of women and greater participation in development efforts. This concerns among other things the fight against stereotypes, particularly in the field of employment.

The telework model would in particular ensure this balance. The pay gap between men and women for the same function is also one of the aberrations to be combated, say our sources.

Currently, Morocco, like other countries, particularly in Africa, *“suffers from a low rate of participation of women in the economy”*, according to Jesko Hentschel, Country Director for the Maghreb and Malta at the World Bank, who highlighted international experiences, particularly in Southeast Asia, where the performance of certain countries in terms of development is linked to the empowerment of women. Today, the transformations that the world is experiencing, especially on the digital level as well as the transition to the green economy, are the key to the revival of economies in the world, it is indicated. *“This requires new skills, and it is important to think about the future of employment”*, stressed Hentschel. □

M.A.M.

Social Security

The «revenants» of the CNSS

THEY operate in the trade, construction, or services sectors. They have given a new sign of life to the National Social Security Agency (CNSS) after having disappeared for a year, or they have simply just registered recently. These are companies that are giving a “sign of life” after having disappeared from the CNSS radars for a year and the newly insured. All these companies are called “incoming” companies according to the CNSS jargon. In 2021, 46,148 incoming insured companies were identified by CNSS, a figure up 18% compared to 2020, characterized by the Covid-19 crisis. Of this number, 62.9% of newcomers are first-time declarants. Faced with these “incoming” companies, CNSS

noted that 25,945 companies, the majority of which employ between 1 and 3 employees, did not make any declaration in 2021.

Failing to give a precise idea of the new companies created, the 2021 demographic report of the CNSS gives an account of the declared payroll, the number of employees, or the sectors concerned.

Overall, the 46,148 incoming insured companies declared 2.87 billion dirhams (US \$ 280,000,000) in terms of payroll, of which 31% was carried out by a handful of companies (228). These companies are found in the payroll bracket of 1 million dirhams (US \$ 100,000) and more, and 54% of insured companies are concentrated in the range from 10,000 MAD

(US \$ 1,000) to 50,000 MAD (US \$ 5,000), which refers to their size since the demographic ratio indicates that most companies have between 1 and 3 employees.

2021, a year marked by the launch of the major social protection project, saw an increase of 4%, at 3.5 million in the overall number of employees declared at least once during the financial year. This year, during which the growth rate reached 7.2% due to the good performance of the agricultural sector and the strong increase in secondary activities as well as the recovery of market services, was characterized by a workforce of 621,861 “incoming” wage-earners of which 355,830 are first-time applicants. These incoming employees were de-

clared for an average of 4.6 months. This figure that hides disparities: 19% were for one single month, 16% for two months, and 13% for three months. On the other hand, only 4% were declared for 12 months. This refers, among other things, to the predominance of seasonal employment.

This being said, the average monthly salary of incoming wage-earners stood at 3,007 Dirhams versus 5,292 gross Dirhams recorded for the entire population of private sector employees. This average hides large differences: 71% of incoming employees earned less than 2,829 dirhams per month and 2% found themselves in the range of 5,000 to 6,000 dirhams. □

Khadija MASMOUDI

Fruits and vegetables

Price frenzy to come down by Ramadan



The Head of Government encouraged the regional and provincial commissions to continue their action at the same pace, or even to strengthen the control of the various production and distribution chains

THE month of Ramadan is looming ahead, less than a month from now, and citizens are in despair at the idea of having to buy tomatoes or other products at exorbitant prices. The Head of Government therefore gave his instructions. It is imperative to cause the movement of prices to return to their usual levels. Moreover, the beginning of the meeting of the Government Council on Thursday, February 16 was devoted to the issue of strengthening control of the national market, guaranteeing its continuous supply of foodstuffs, and the fight against speculation. To reassure the population, the Government

Council indicated that the prices of food products including tomatoes, vegetables, meats, and table oil have started to fall. Prices will keep on following this trend over the next few days to reach the usual levels before the start of Ramadan, it was said. The Government Council also underlined that the interministerial commissions made up of the departments of the Interior, Agriculture, Industry, and Finance, in charge of market control, ensured the daily monitoring of the markets.

These operations are part of the work of the regional and provincial commissions, supervised by the walis and governors. The daily monitoring

of the national market is carried out by these commissions. The Head of Government encourages them to continue their action at the same pace, even to strengthen the control of the various production and distribution chains. Similarly, the Government has decided to reduce the export of fruits and vegetables. From now on, priority is given to supplying the national market. Once the prices of these products have stabilized and the situation has returned to normal, producers will then be able to resume their exports. Egg producers are not left out. Indeed, they decided to increase the daily production from 15 million to 17 million eggs per day,

which will impact the retail price of a highly consumed product during the month of Ramadan. For Aziz Akhannouch, the Government must take measures and ensure follow-up until everything returns to normal, prices included. The Head of Government invited his ministers to continue on the same trend in terms of rigorous control of the production and marketing chains. Added to this is work in the field and communication, which could reflect the real image of the work of the Government, particularly concerning the major projects contained in the Government's program. □

Mohamed CHAOU

Weekly highlights

Judicial experts New entities are coming

THE Government wants to make up for the lack of judicial experts. This particularly concerns certain new fields, in particular renewable energies, linguistic analysis, image and video analysis, identification of fingerprints, or protection from nuclear radiation. This is the goal of the bill reforming the laws and regulations governing judicial experts. This draft legislation, recently adopted by the Government Council, has been submitted to the Parliament, and was transferred to the Justice Committee in the House of Representatives. Concretely, this draft legislation will pave the way for certain organizations to be registered on the lists of judicial experts. To access such a list, judicial experts must have already demonstrated credibility, professionalism, and availability, in the absence of experts specialized in the fields concerned.

In detail, article 4 bis of this bill empowers legal persons governed by public law, as well as laboratories,

institutes or public administrations, to exercise judicial expertise. One of the conditions provided for is that the natural persons who will carry out these expert appraisals meet the requirements of the law. Article 3 of Law 45-00 in force has established a series of criteria. Indeed, all candidates for registration on the list of judicial experts must meet these conditions: be a Moroccan national, or the national of a State which has entered into an agreement with Morocco authorizing its nationals to practice on the territory, not having been sentenced to a disciplinary or financial penalty, have a domicile in the district of the Court of Appeals in which the judicial expert intends to practice, and above all satisfy the qualification criteria set by regulation for each discipline of expertise.

Under the law in force, the expert entered on the roll for the first time takes an oath before the Court of Appeals in the district in which he or she



In order to be included in the list of legal experts, the new organizations must have already demonstrated credibility, professionalism, and availability, in the absence of experts specialized in the fields concerned. The goal of this reform is to remedy this deficit, particularly in areas such as renewable energies, linguistic analysis, and other areas

is registered. According to the draft law, this oath is taken, in the name of the legal person under private law, by that person's legal representative. For legal persons governed by public law, including institutes, laboratories or administrations, the oath is taken by the legal representative or by the persons in charge of carrying out the forensic examination. Moreover, this draft legislation requires each of these legal

persons, registered on the list of judicial experts, to appoint a representative from among the people responsible for carrying out the forensic examination, so that they attend the planned training sessions. Indeed, the experts registered on the roll are required to participate in study sessions relating to the legal aspects of a forensic examination, organized by the Ministry of Justice. □

M.A.M.

African Symphony

A mega-fresco illuminates the Rabat Museum of Modern Art

THE mural that is in the process of being created on the facade of the Mohammed VI Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Rabat will be completed before the end of this month. It is a creation of artist-painter Moustapha Zoufri, originally from Nador and laureate of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Brussels and the Superior School of Visual Arts in the city of Mons. The first brushstroke of this "African Symphony" fresco was given on January 26, 2023. The fresco is produced as part of the celebration of Rabat as the Cultural Capital of Africa, which in itself represents a vibrant tribute to the African continent, cradle of mankind and experiencing an artistic boom. The realization of this fresco, which bears the name "African Symphony", is also a first step in an exhibition project at the Bab Rouah gallery in May 2023. The concept of this mural is original and crosses traditional Moroccan signs. (Arab-Islamic,



The receivers (of the message) only have to open their ears to listen to the colors of my symphony, because a painting that cannot be heard has no reason to exist, says painter Moustapha Zoufri

mic, Amazigh, Hassani and Hebrew) with traditional signs from the rest of Africa (the Adinkra signs from Gui-

nea, the signs of the bogolans, traditional fabrics from Mali, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, and the raffias from the Kingdom of Congo, among other fabrics). It is a fusion inspired by authentic creations produced by craftsmen for various utilitarian, ritual, religious reasons, on jewelry, masks, carpets, textiles, tattoos, sacrifices, etc. "Personally, I avail of all of these signs for their aesthetic and plastic beauty, without any other ideological, cultural, religious or other exploitation", said Moustapha Zoufri from the outset. The different linguistic or graphic signs used are stripped of their extracultural meanings and are at the service of aesthetic and plastic concerns. They are triggers of curiosity aiming at challenging the viewers and providing them with new and strange sensations. This is why the various graphic expressions of Moroccan heritage vibrate like pieces of music, which contributes to the transformation of the mural into a symphony made up of

colored scores. "A painting that cannot be heard does not deserve to be painted and does not deserve to be exhibited or seen", explains Zoufri. The dominant ocher in the realization of this fresco brings out the designs and shapes used in the basic products of Moroccan and African daily life. That said, the artist is called upon to avoid the redundancy of what is identical to the work of the craftsman. Physical effort combined with intellectual effort produces original forms and provokes new curiosities. "A wall fresco or a painting is a kind of choreography inspired by the direct contact that the artist has with his or her work". "As for the substance of creativity, it relates to a purely mathematical process called in Arabic *Morabaa Attawafouq* (magic square) that Zoufri develops in the field of plastic art. It's a 'golden ratio' which ensures me perfect and harmonious compositions", he confided to our newspaper. □

Ali KHARROUBI