

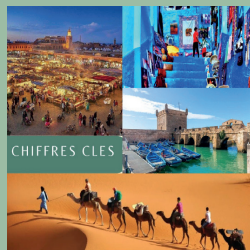
# Weekly highlights by L'ECONOMISTE

## Atlantic Morocco

# New deal



**Housing: Conditions for direct assistance clarified**



**Tourism 2024  
The projected end of ONMT**



**Declarations on terms of payment  
1st countdown**

### EDITORIAL

### Boost

Mohamed CHAUI

**T**HE King's visionary nature is increasingly confirmed. After the Mediterranean sea, with the Tanger Med and Nador West harbor projects in particular, the focus is now on developing a strategy for the Atlantic coast of Africa. The contours of this strategy were outlined in the speech marking the 48th anniversary of the Green March. What is proposed is an area of development and prosperity along the entire coastline, encompassing 23 of Africa's 54 countries. To support this new momentum, an institutional framework befitting a South-South partnership will be put in place. As has been seen over the past two decades, in its economic and trade cooperation with the continent, Morocco never adopted a patronizing attitude. The country has constantly favored relations between partners, on an equal footing. Today, Morocco offers its experience of the economic development model of the

Southern provinces, considered to be the gateway to Africa. The gas pipeline project linking Nigeria to Morocco, before continuing on to Europe, is already on the table. The pipeline will supply the countries along its route with the energy they need for their development. In this new vision of the world, the countries of the region will not be left behind. They will have full access to the Atlantic coast. However, to make the most of the opportunities that lie ahead, these countries will need to develop their infrastructure. In any case, in this future configuration, the establishment of a national shipping company is essential. Last year, members of parliament had already alerted the Minister of Transport to the need to launch a study to create a fleet of ships flying the Moroccan flag. The royal speech gives this idea a real boost. □

## Weekly highlights

# Housing: Conditions for direct assistance clarified

**T**HE presentation of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development's budget to the Interior Committee was an opportunity to unveil further aspects of direct assistance for access to housing. As Minister Fatima Ezzahra El Mansouri was absent, it was the Secretary General of her department, accompanied by the Minister for Relations with Parliament, who took charge of this mission.

In addition to the two amounts of housing assistance (100,000 Dirhams - USD 10,000 - and 70,000 Dirhams - USD 7,000), Youssef Hassani listed the conditions for granting this support. Applicants must not be the owners of a property reserved for housing. They must not have benefited from any aid or advantage granted by the Government in the field of housing. The property in question must be transferred for the first time and the building permit must have been issued on or after January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023. Similarly, a buyer must commit to making the property his or her prin-



cipal residence for 5 years. The terms and conditions for granting assistance are specified as follows. Once the application has been submitted to the digital platform, an applicant is granted initial approval. This is followed by the conclusion of a sales agreement and the filing of a copy in

the platform. This is followed by the transfer of the grant to a notary and the conclusion of a final deed of sale. These procedures are carried out via the digital platform dedicated to this operation. This platform will be set up in partnership with the Caisse de dépôt et de gestion (CDG) (Govern-

ment's) financial institution. The aim is to ensure the transparency of this aid operation, on a first-come, first-served basis, which presupposes the signing of partnership agreements with the relevant stakeholders, in particular the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Finance, and the Land Registry Agency. The Al Omrane real estate group, the government's operator specialized in the housing and development sector, is responsible for carrying out pilot projects.

On a social level, the goals of real estate development are to strengthen the purchasing power of families to own housing in rural and urban areas. The aim is also to cover housing needs and consolidate integration into projects. On the economic front, the idea is to preserve the real estate sector's place in the national economy, improve the annual employment opportunities created, and boost private sector participation, particularly by SMEs, not to mention the organization and control of the real estate market. □

Mohamed CHAUI

## Tourism 2024

# The projected end of ONMT

**T**OURISM Minister Fatim-Zahra Ammor took the opportunity of presenting her budget for 2024 to the House of Representatives' Productive Sectors Committee to announce the imminent phasing out of the ONMT (Moroccan National Tourist Office). The Minister plans to transform this Office into a Moroccan Tourism Agency in early 2024. The aim is to create a structure serving the Government's tourism promotion strategy. The Agency will be equipped with the resources it needs to carry out its missions effectively, while strengthening the competitiveness of Morocco as an international destination. There is no doubt that the hosting in Morocco of soccer competitions such as the African Cup of Nations (AFCON) in 2025 and the World Cup in 2030 will contribute to the implementation of this strategy and the promotion of our country's image. In the same vein, the Ministry's 2024 action plan calls for the repositioning of the Tourism Observatory to renew and develop



its working tools. The aim is to broaden its reach to obtain the elements needed for monitoring and decision-making on a global scale.

During her presentation, the Minister of Tourism and Handicrafts reviewed the measures taken to cope with the effects of the Al Haouz earthquake. To this end, 711 million dirhams

(USD 71 million) have been mobilized to rehabilitate the 767 damaged hotel units. Of this total, 438 units are located in the province of Marrakech, 160 in Al Haouz, 159 in Ouarzazate, and 10 in Taroudant. Other measures include the reinforcement of socio-economic development in the affected areas. A total of 152 future pro-

jects have been identified, including 32 tourist accommodation establishments and as many sports and leisure clubs.

There are also 28 exhibition and sales areas, 17 entertainment projects, and 15 catering projects. In terms of location, 63 projects are in the province of Al Haouz, 54 in Taroudant, 14 in Ouarzazate, 12 in Azilal, and 9 in Chichaoua.

The number of tourists coming to Morocco reached 11.1 million, up 44% compared to the same period in 2022. The same upward trend was recorded in terms of overnight stays in tourist accommodation establishments, which reached 19.4 million, an increase of almost 46%.

In addition, the Ministry continued its efforts to encourage tourism investment and product development through the Moroccan Tourism Engineering Corporation (SMIT). As a result, the volume of investment is gradually returning to the levels seen in previous years. □

Mohamed CHAUI

## Why Morocco is looking to the Atlantic

«**M**orocco is a tree whose roots reach deep into Africa, and whose leaves rustle in the winds of Europe». The words of the late Hassan II reflected his entourage's geostrategic vision of Morocco. Today, the Kingdom is taking a new step by turning more towards its Atlantic seaboard. This was one of the key points in the royal speech marking the anniversary of the Green March. His Majesty King Mohammed VI outlined the main thrust of this new strategy, which is part of the country's drive to diversify its partnerships. «*While Morocco's Mediterranean coastline is firmly anchored to Europe, its Atlantic side*

### A new course for the Southern Provinces

**F**OLLOWING the transformational projects launched in the southern provinces in the fields of infrastructure, agriculture, fisheries, energy, and other fields, the Sovereign has set a new course to confirm the new calling of these territories as development hubs. This vision is in line with the new geostrategic vision for the Atlantic seaboard, especially «*since the Kingdom recovered its Southern provinces, its calling as an Atlantic country has been further affirmed*». Today, the aim is to equip these territories with a new generation of transformational projects. «*To ensure a fluid connection between the various components of the Atlantic coast, we are committed to providing the necessary means of transport and logistical stations*», said the Sovereign. Among the avenues proposed is the need to think about building a strong and competitive national merchant marine fleet. This strategic shift will be decisive in supporting the Kingdom's ambitions, especially as most of the Kingdom's foreign trade is carried out by sea. At present, unless the Moroccan flag is refloated, the foreign fleet will monopolize the lion's share of maritime traffic to and from Morocco. □



By proposing new initiatives to support the development of the region's states, Morocco capitalizes on its expertise on the continent (Photo: MAP agency)

*gives it full access to Africa and a window on the American space*». So, after strengthening its strategic partnership with the United States, Morocco is launching a new project to further consolidate its partnership with the African states on its Atlantic seaboard. «*Our wish is for the Atlantic seaboard to become a space for human interaction and economic integration, and to make sure it plays a key role at the continental and international levels*», said the Sovereign.

Indeed, this new geostrategic vision confirms the dynamic that has been underway in the region for several years now. Faced with a situation of no real existence of a Maghreb union, which costs the countries of this area GDP points every year, Mo-

rocco could not stand idly by. In addition to strengthening partnerships with West African states, the idea is to launch transformational projects with all the states on the continent's Atlantic seaboard.

Unlike other countries that position themselves as regional powers, Morocco has opted for an African policy based on a win-win logic, having already proved its worth through partnerships with several of the continent's states.

Today, the aim is to capitalize on this expertise to support the development of African countries on the western side of the continent. Especially since Morocco, «*a country renowned for its stability and credibility, is well aware of the issues and challenges facing African countries, particularly*

*those on the Atlantic seaboard*», said the Sovereign. The Kingdom can play a catalytic role in development in this region, whose countries suffer from a number of problems that the security approach alone has not been able to resolve. In fact, «*despite the quality of its human resources and the abundance of its natural resources, Atlantic Africa has a significant deficit in terms of infrastructure and investment*», hence the need to mobilize financing, but also know-how, to speed up the development dynamics in these countries. Morocco is banking on a participatory approach, involving not only the countries concerned, but also foreign partners, within the framework of international cooperation. □

M.A.M.

### Catalyst

**I**N its role as a catalyst for growth, Morocco is putting forward a new and concrete proposal to encourage a virtuous momentum in the Sahel region for example, which is undermined by the fragility of state systems and the multiplication of security threats, against a backdrop of poverty and underdevelopment. To reverse this trend, Morocco is working «*in concert with our brothers in Africa and all our partners, to develop practical and efficient responses*». The King was abundantly clear about the difficulties and problems facing the Sahel states. For the Sovereign «*the solution may not be security and military based alone*». Rather, it must be based on «*an approach based on cooperation and shared development*». In this context, Morocco is putting forward a new initiative, with an international dimension, to «*promote access by the Sahel States to the Atlantic Ocean*». This ambition may not be achieved without upgrading the infrastructure of these countries. This is essential if they are to be connected to the transport and communications networks operating in their regional environment. For the Sovereign, «*this initiative will substantially transform the economies of these countries and, beyond, the entire region*».

## Weekly highlights

### Declarations on terms of payment 1st countdown

**T**HE first implementation of the law on payment deadlines, which fell due on Tuesday October 31, lived up to all its promises. The operation resulted in 4,700 declarations via the Simpl platform of the General Tax Directorate (DGI). All the targeted entities that had exceeded the legal threshold complied with the obligation to file. Of the declarations filed, 1,600 were accompanied by payment of the corresponding financial penalty. This brings the total amount of fines paid online to 130 million Dirhams (US 13 million). This represents consolidated outstanding payments of around 4.3 billion Dirhams (US 430 million) for the period from July to the end of September 2023 alone, bearing in mind that the amount of the fine is not uniform. It stands at 3% for the first month of delay, increased by 0.85% for each additional month or fraction of a month of delay. Moreover, in the first phase, only invoices of 10,000 Dirhams (US 1,000) incl. VAT,



The appointment of the Directorate General of Taxes (DGI) as the main administrator of the law on payment deadlines is a real revolution and should generate a quantum leap in improving the business climate (Photo by L'Economiste)

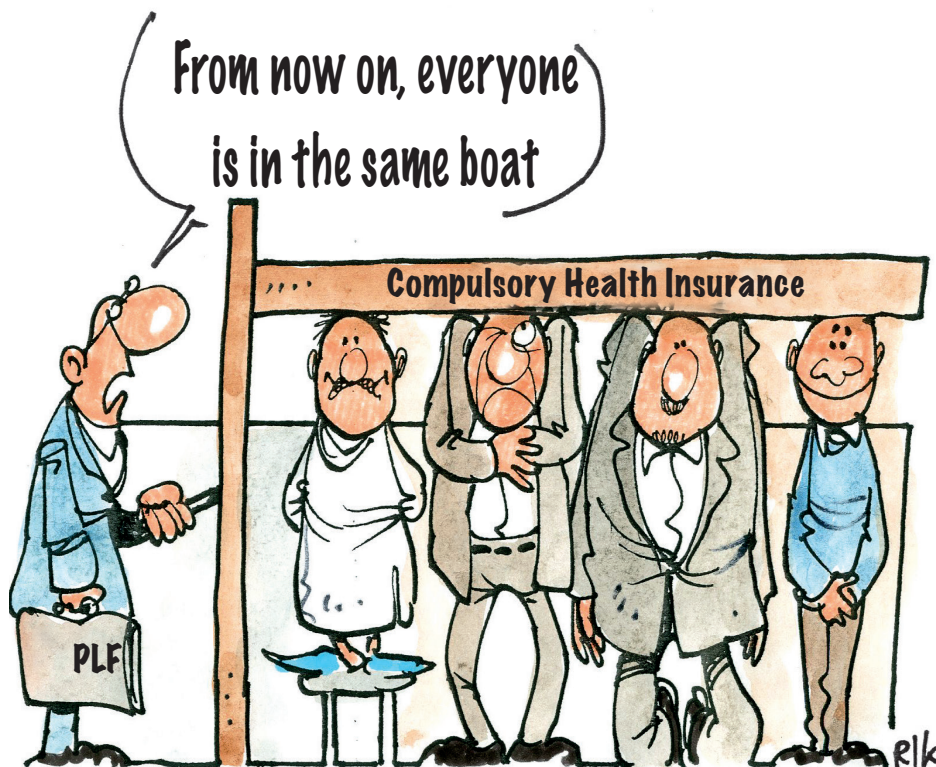
issued between July 01 and September 30, are concerned. The new legislation on payment terms targets companies with sales in excess of 50 million Dirhams (US 5 million) excluding tax, a threshold exceeded by barely 4,700 companies, which is indicative of the size of national businesses and the economic fabric in general. The next declaration covers invoices with a value of over 10,000 dirhams (incl. tax) issued between October 01 and December 31, 2023. Taxpayers will also have to declare invoices

dating from the 3rd quarter that have not been paid on time or have been partially paid, until all outstanding amounts have been settled (see L'Economiste # 6629 of 30/10/2023). The same exercise will have to be carried out for 4th quarter (and 3rd quarter) arrears no later than January 31, 2024. Taxpayers will need to be particularly vigilant when it comes to invoices. In fact, «unbilled deliveries, which are the subject of a simple delivery note, should be monitored in particular, as the risk of oversight is higher in this case, especially as, in the absence of these supporting documents, these deliveries are not yet integrated into the accounts, especially for non-computerized entities», recommends Soufyane Aboukad, chartered accountant, partner at SAB Consulting and former president of the tax and legal commission of the Moroccan Employers Confederation (CGEM) for the Souss-Massa region. □

Hassan EL ARIF

## Self-employed workers: Deductible social security charges

**T**HERE is a little measure that will certainly please self-employed workers and freelancers. As of next year, they will be able to deduct social security contributions for compulsory health insurance (AMO) and pensions. The provision specifically concerns non-salaried workers subject to income tax under the real or simplified net income regime. «Currently, sums deducted by the owner of a sole proprietorship from his or her accounts as remuneration for one's work are not considered as expenses deductible from the taxable base for professional income tax, including expenses relating to one's social security contributions», explains the Ministry of Finance in the note presenting the Finance Law. This provision, which would cost around 90 million Dirhams (USD 9 million), should ensure fairness for all taxpayers. The right to deduct social security contributions already applies to other categories. In any case, this provision is in line with the national strategy to generalize social coverage.



The year 2023 was marked by the completion of the body of laws relating to the generalization of compulsory health insurance (AMO). This was the case with the enactment of Law no. 60-22 on the AMO scheme for people who are able to pay their contributions and are not engaged in any paid or unpaid activity, setting out in particular the conditions for registration with the scheme and the methods of financing it. The same applies to the draft decree on basic AMO for people unable to pay their contributions, known as «AMO Tadamon». The year was also marked by the publication of a decree extending the deadline for submitting applica-

tions to continue to benefit from the AMO Tadamon scheme, essentially by persons subject to the AMO TNS scheme, to November 30, 2023. In the case of the AMO TNS scheme in particular, measures have been taken to address the problems posed by the collection of contributions, through the publication of a decree setting out the model agreements to be concluded between the National Social Security Fund (CNSS) and public institutions or legal entities for the delegation of the collection of contributions. Similarly, a bill amending law no. 98-15 of June 25, 2017 on the AMO TNS scheme is in the approval circuit. The aim is to institutionalize the conditionality of the granting of public aid and subsidies for the benefit of individuals and legal entities subject to the AMO-TNS scheme, through regularity in the payment of contributions and introduce a waiting period of three months for Non-Salaried Workers (TNSs) who settle their situation after a period of non-payment exceeding 6 months. □

Khadija MASMOUDI