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Regionalization, federalism and development in Morocco

Conference paper by Jochen Lobah

As the regional representative of the German Hanns Seidel Foundation for Morocco and Mauritania, I am responsible for the realization of two main projects, financed by the German Federal Ministry of Cooperation as well as by the Foreign Ministry, strengthening judicial and administrative reform (BMZ), as well as administrative and economic decentralization with a special reference to gender issues.

The topic as well as the discussion is extremely important because in conformity with the new Constitution of 2011, Morocco is currently working on a decentralization process, called the advanced regionalization which will contribute to a more democratic structure and an approach to shared power between municipalities, regions and the national level.

The formal and administrative process needs to be accompanied by an improvement of the economic situation, i.e. the process of administrative regionalization should have a direct impact of the economic development on a local and regional level. It must facilitate the legal framework for investment on a local and regional level and taking into account local traditions and geography.

Especially with regard to Morocco this topic is extremely important due to its stability and »monarchical exception« in the region which enables the country to invest in the structural sector and in the deprived regions. The topic is relevant as well with regard to the 2011 Constitution which under Title IX promotes regionalization and a sort of federalism as well as under Title XII (Good Governance) the promotion of a sustainable human development and social inclusion for every citizen. So the Constitution is the framework and pushes at the same time for further reforms.

On a regional and local level, this project can succeed with the support of the civil society, engaging actively in decentralization and good governance on a local level as well as with a new initiative for creating more entrepreneurship, especially SME on the same level. The objective is to prevent a further exodus into the big cities like Casablanca, Rabat-Salé, Kenitra and Tanger and to develop the regions not only from a viewpoint of the public administrations but also on the economic level.

The conference and the meeting of experts of the region will be extremely important to get a different view and different approaches from other countries and NGO with regard to the topic. But it will be sure that decentralization cannot succeed without being accompanied by economic activity and a civil society, which strengthens this process.

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