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PRESS RELEASE

The Attijariwafa Bank Foundation Analyzes the New Positioning of the Southern Shore of the Mediterranean

Casablanca, May 31, 2021 - «**The world after: how do the countries of the southern shore of the Mediterranean fit in?**» is the current theme addressed by the Attijariwafa Bank Foundation, as part of its series of digital conferences «Exchange to better Understand».

The meeting, which took place on May 27, 2021, was live-streamed on the Foundation's Youtube channel. It brought together **Mr. Fathallah Sijilmassi**, CEO of Positive Agenda Advisory and former Ambassador, and **Ms. Agnès Levallois**, Professor at the IEP (Institute of Political Studies) in Paris, Research Master at the Foundation for Strategic Research (FRS) and Vice President of the Institute for Research and Studies on the Mediterranean and the Middle East (iReMMO). The event was moderated by **Mr. Zakaria Garti**, Principal Banker at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and a member of the NGO community.

Attentive to the concerns of economic operators, academics and civil society players, the Attijariwafa Bank Foundation has chosen to give the floor to two renowned experts in the fields of international relations and diplomacy, to deliver keys to understanding the geostrategic issues that will influence the future of the southern Mediterranean region and its relations with the rest of the world, especially with Europe.



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A fascinating exchange between the two speakers helped put into perspective the major challenges facing the region, both in the economic, demographic, technological and sustainable development. Contrary to preconceived ideas, says Mr. Sijilmassi, globalization would not be called into question. On the other hand, it is called to be reshaped with the multiplication of regional groupings. «In this dynamic, the African reality must be strengthened through South-South cooperation. The strategy of the Attijariwafa bank group is, in this respect, a perfect illustration of this dynamic.

For Ms. Levallois, the development of Europe cannot be achieved without the southern shore of the Mediterranean. «It is in Europe's interest to rethink cooperation with the South, while engaging in a debate on the arbitration of priorities between the East of the continent and the South of the Mediterranean. The arrival of new players such as China, Russia or Turkey, would force Europe to reassess its relationship in the sense of a rebalancing between the East and South, avoiding falling into exclusive relations. However, the failure of regional integration of the Maghreb countries does not allow, to date, to optimize this cooperation. Moreover, it costs them 2 points of growth each year, a considerable loss of earnings. However, in the absence of this integration, Morocco has developed its trade with sub-Saharan African countries. And the consolidation of this South/South intra-African cooperation (via the African Union in particular), increases the chances of building a stronger and more balanced partnership with Europe. Hence the need to accelerate African resilience that is inclusive, green and digital.

Through this new conference-debate generating many questions from Internet users to which the speakers have responded, the Attijariwafa Bank Foundation demonstrates, once again, its desire to promote debate and reflection on issues that affect the future of our country and our continent, by calling on experts recognized for their skills and the relevance of their analysis.

Replay link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PYHU0e0sAlM&t=2672s>



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VERBATIMS

FathallahSijilmassi

We need to move beyond institutional debates to address concrete issues such as demography, youth and employment. Knowing that Africa will have 4.5 billion inhabitants in 2100, and that 50% of young people under 18 will be Africans, the migratory and security challenges to come will be paramount.

In the current global reconfiguration, emerging countries have also developed levers to provide solutions, while playing a more important role internationally, beyond economic or security considerations.

Agnès Levallois

In order to solve the current migration problems, I advocate for the free movement of people in both directions in order to fluidify the flows between the two sides of the Mediterranean. According to numerous researches, the more people move freely, the less migration problems there are. This is the only way to reduce distrust and mistrust of each other.

I also dream of a great Mediterranean Erasmus that would contribute to this opening in both directions and a better knowledge of each other.



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Speakers Bio Express

Mr. Fathallah Sijilmassi, President and Founder of Positive Agenda Advisory, is also a Senior Advisor and/or Director to economic, financial and academic institutions.

Former Ambassador of His Majesty the King, may God assist Him, and former Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), Mr. Sijilmassi holds a PhD in International Economics, is a graduate of the Grenoble Institute of Political Studies and is a practicing diplomat. He has held several senior positions in the Moroccan administration which led him to participate in the negotiation of several international economic agreements. Mr. Sijilmassi is also the author of a reference book published in 2019, «The future of Europe is in the South», co-edited by two Think Tanks (CEPS - Brussels and EMEA-Barcelona) and crowned in 2020 by the French-speaking economic book prize.

Mrs. Agnès Levallois is a research associate at the Foundation for Strategic Research (FRS), specializing in political, economic and social developments in the contemporary Arab world and in the analysis of conflicts in the Middle East. She was Director of Information and Programs at RMC-Moyen-Orient (RFI's Arabic-language subsidiary) and Deputy Director of the editorial staff of France 24 in charge of the Arabic channel. She is a professor at the Paris Institute of Political Studies and vice-president of the Institute for Research and Studies on the Mediterranean and the Middle East (iReMMO) and a member of the editorial board of the quarterly magazine Confluences Méditerranée.

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