



CONFERENCE SERIES

## « Exchange to Better Understand »



### PRESS RELEASE

#### The Attijariwafa bank Foundation Pays Tribute to the Courage of Moroccan Women in Coping with the Health Crisis

**Friday march 26, 2021** - As part of its series of digital conferences «Exchange to better Understand», the Attijariwafa Bank Foundation organized, on Thursday March 18, 2021 in live streaming on its YouTube channel, a meeting with a distinguished guest, Mrs. Nouzha Skalli, President of the Think Tank Awal Houriates and former Minister in charge of Women's Rights, around the theme «The Moroccan woman to the test of the health crisis».

Moderated by Mrs. Meza Zeghari, Head of the Attijariwafa Bank Foundation, the discussion was marked by several testimonies full of humanity, of women from all walks of life telling their experience of the health crisis. A tribute was paid to women doctors who were on the frontline of the fight against Covid-19. Their emotional account of their struggle in the Covid hospital units was one of the highlights of the conference.

At the beginning, Mrs. Skalli recalled, with figures, the delay of Morocco in terms of parity, and the persistence of discrimination against women, in the private and professional sphere. A situation that the brutal outbreak of the Covid-19, has exacerbated, even though women were in the front line in the management of the health crisis. «Women doctors, who make up more than half of the medical staff in our country, have seen their lives turned upside down overnight, but they have not hesitated to serve their country by mobilizing night and day, far from their families, and exposing themselves to the risk of contamination by the virus. We should all be grateful for their selflessness and self-sacrifice,» said Ms. Skalli.

The discussion then shifted to the reasons for the decline in the female labor force participation rate since 2000, from 30% to less than 20% currently. «This represents a huge loss for our country. It is important to know that the eradication of discrimination against women could result in an increase of 39.5% of GDP per capita according to OECD estimates. It is therefore a significant wealth pool that would allow us to accelerate the pace of growth and progress». It should be noted that the low economic contribution of women in all MENA countries would represent a shortfall of 575 billion dollars.





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In light of this situation, it is not surprising that women's leadership is lagging behind. According to the HCP, less than 13% of companies in Morocco are headed by women. «Some large groups are trying to establish parity. For example, the Attijariwafa bank group adopted a charter for gender diversity on the day of the defense of women's rights and launched a vast initiative to promote parity. But such initiatives are still rare», said Zeghari. For Ms. Skalli, this initiative is a sign of good governance. «More globally, to break the glass ceiling, or rather, the iron ceiling, several associations accompany women entrepreneurs; and on this register, the massive use of NTI can be a boon to accelerate the progress of female entrepreneurship.

In the private sphere, the promotion of gender equality is also legitimate because women devote up to 7 times more time to others, and in particular to members of their family, according to a HCP survey.

The current situation is critical because the damage of the health crisis on women is of several kinds: job insecurity, exacerbation of family violence, aggravation of psychological pressure and decline in socialization.

«We have a moral debt to the health staff and their material claims are legitimate,» said the president of Awal Houriates.

There is great hope that the new development model will insist on the need to fight against all these injustices and to apply public policies on the ground with respect to gender equality. «During the lockdown, aid for the poor was paid exclusively to heads of household, given that almost 7% of households are headed by women. And even in households consisting of couples, it was the man who cashed the aid, while the woman generates income for the whole family!». To avoid these injustices, it is urgent to apply the law by taking into account gender equality in the implementation of public policies. «I already welcome the generalization of social protection, but it will only have the desired impact if it is applied according to gender parity.»

Through this new conference-debate, which raised many questions from Internet users that the guest answered with interest, the Attijariwafa Bank Foundation demonstrates, once again, its willingness to promote debate and reflection on issues that affect the future of our country by calling on figures known for their competence and commitment in the field.

Replay link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFK0KCsw3gU&t=1028s>





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## Express Bio of Mrs. Nouzha Skalli

Trained as a pharmacist, parliamentarian and women's rights activist, Ms. Nouzha Skalli chairs the think tank AWAL HOURIATES created in 2018.

Former Minister of Social Development, Family and Solidarity, between 2007 and 2011, she is the first political figure, member of a Moroccan government, to propose a loosening of the law on abortion in Morocco.

Previously, Ms. Skalli was a member of the House of Representatives (2002-2007 and 2011-2016) and the first female head of a parliamentary group (2003).

She was also the head of the parliamentary group of the Socialist Alliance, from 2003 to 2004, and initiated several structuring actions in favor of the promotion of the role of women in various fields and in favor of the protection of their rights.

Her political commitment has been crowned by several prestigious national and international awards: Knight of the Legion of Honor in 2012 by the French Republic; and Gold Medal of the President of the Italian Republic in recognition of her decisive contribution to the promotion of women's rights in Morocco.

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