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PRESS RELEASE

**The Attijariwafa bank Foundation sheds light on the entrepreneurial potential
of the Beni Mellal-Khenifra region**

Thursday, December 12, 2019. The Attijariwafa bank Foundation organized in Beni Mellal, on Thursday, December 12, 2019, in partnership with ENCG Beni Mellal, the 55th edition of the conference series «Exchange to better Understand», under the theme: «**Entrepreneurship, Vector of Job Creation in the Beni Mellal-Khenifra Region**».

During this new regional meeting, which attracted more than 250 students, professors and project leaders, the Attijariwafa bank Foundation headed to the city of Beni Mellal to meet with the faculty and students of Sultan Moulay Slimane University to raise their awareness of entrepreneurship and the potential for job creation and socio-economic inclusion in the Beni Mellal-Khenifra region.

In a welcoming address on behalf of **Mr. Mohamed El Kettani**, CEO of the Attijariwafa bank group, Mr. Mohamed Karim Chraïbi, Director of the Marrakech-Beni Mellal-Tafilalet Region, explained: «The challenge in the coming years will be to create new employment opportunities in the region to promote the professional integration of these promising young people. Admittedly, the authorities are making great efforts to strengthen the infrastructure for receiving investors, promote its potential and create and strengthen ecosystems. But the university's role is also decisive in stimulating the entrepreneurial spirit and supporting its laureates in the realization of their projects.»

For his part, **Mr. Nabil Hmina**, President of Sultan Moulay Slimane University, recalled the need to create wealth in the Beni Mellal-Khenifra region through entrepreneurship. This component will be an integral part of the university's educational programs. «In Morocco, the status of the student-entrepreneur has just been adopted; it will be introduced in all academic institutions, including those with open access. Entrepreneurship will then be a key component of the educational redesign we are currently working on.»



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In turn, **Mr. Mohamed Sabri**, Deputy Director of ENCG Beni Mellal, stressed the need to open up the academic world to its socio-economic environment and to encourage young people to stay in their region by receiving adequate training to enable them to participate in its development. «The University is aware of the need to develop skills for investors interested in our region. Our students are at the heart of our concerns. We are doing our best to keep our young people in the region.»

Moderated by **Mr. El Mehdi Fakir**, Economist and Risk Management Consultant, this meeting, organized around two panels, focused on the testimonies of the University's laureates, project leaders and small business creators, most of whom benefited from the guidance of **Ms. Fatima-Zahra Nafaa**, ENACTUS Morocco Representative

The first panel brought together **Mr. Mohamed Amine Bekkali**, Director of CRI; **Mr. Tariq Aboulkheir**, Director of the Beni Mellal ANAPEC agency and **Mr. Khalid Lakhari**, Representative of the VSE market of the Attijariwafa bank group. Stressing the importance of the region's potential and assets, the three panellists detailed the range of free services and facilities available to young project leaders and entrepreneurs.

The second panel brought together **Ms. Mouna Idrissi**, Founder of the women's cooperative «Timicha», **Mr. Rachid Snoussi**, Founder of «Oumnity Entreprenre», **Ms. Amina Majdi**, Founder of the craft and agricultural cooperative «Khemissa Sanad», and **Mr. Mourad El Baz**, Director and Founder of «Skills Campus». These young entrepreneurs shared their experiences with emotion, while providing practical advice to students who showed great receptivity.

Through this conference-debate, the Attijariwafa bank Foundation demonstrates, once again, its willingness to promote, across all regions, a constructive debate on economic and socio-cultural issues concerning the future of our country.



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VERBATIMS

Mr. Khalid Lakhari, VSE Market Representative, Attijariwafa Bank Group

«After travelling through several regions and collecting the needs of potential entrepreneurs, we have set up a simplified educational program on www.daralmoukawil.com website, covering 140 courses in Arabic and French.»

Mr. Mohamed Amine Bekkali, Director of Beni Mellal-Khenifra CRI

«Given the mismatch between the region's potential and its low contribution to GDP, it is imperative to improve the competitiveness of our products. Students have a role to play in proposing new ideas by benchmarking internationally. We are not going to reinvent the wheel!»

Mrs. Mouna Idrissi, Founder of the «Timicha» cooperative

«At the beginning, we were 8 women and we decided to escape poverty by drawing on our know-how. We started with 8,000 dirhams, a roofless garage and limited means. Today, we are 68 women, not counting the beneficiaries, we have our salaries and we exhibit our products in the major trade fairs in Europe and the United States.»

Mr. Mourad El Baz, Director and Founder of «Skills Campus»

«The survey we conducted in 2015 revealed that 35% of students at the universities of Casablanca and Settat were from Beni Mellal-Khenifra. The main reason for their exodus was linked to the absence of a certification body, particularly for languages such as TOEFL. We have decided to create a certification center within Sultan Moulay Slimane University. Today, the 140 students at ENCG Beni Mellal will be the first nationally to be certified BSE, for free (American certification that helps to complete knowledge in entrepreneurship).»

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