Honorable Heads of State,
Distinguished Governors,
Mr. President of the African Development Bank,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a real pleasure for me to send this message to the distinguished participants in the Annual Meetings of the African Development Bank Group, and to welcome them to Morocco, the land of gatherings and fruitful interaction.

I am particularly pleased that your Annual Meetings are being held in Marrakech, a city steeped in history and a symbol of openness and African brotherhood.

To reflect my high regard for this pan-African institution, I was delighted to grant my patronage to this year’s Annual Meetings of the AfDB Group and to invite a number of distinguished Heads of State of sister African nations to grace us with their presence at the opening session.

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Annual Meetings of the African Development Bank Group are being held at a critical juncture which is characterized, in particular, by an acceleration of the structural reform of the international economic order, and by a gradual shift of the global economy’s center of gravity towards the South. Given the current crisis gripping the industrialized world, the countries of the South - including China, India and Brazil - are poised to become the engines of global economic growth. Considering the remarkable growth rates achieved in recent years, some African countries are set to join this leading group; hence the weight of the global economy is shifting towards the South, including African countries. Concurrently, a re-definition of the nature of relationships is under way, as we move from relations based on hegemony and dependence to ties built on partnership and economic attractiveness.

Africa boasts several significant assets in this regard. First, our continent has a large and fast growing pool of young, increasingly skilled human resources. It also has abundant natural resources - particularly oil and minerals - vast, fertile expanses of land and significant water resources. Finally, the continent’s potential for economic and social development is enormous; indeed major projects relating to infrastructure, industrialization and social development are either under way or being launched.
For all these reasons, there is tremendous, unprecedented interest in Africa which, today, is a truly attractive option when it comes to partnership and economic growth.

Seen from this perspective, the way seems to be paved for Africa to achieve inclusive, sustainable growth, provided the major challenges confronting our continent are addressed in a bold manner.

The Annual Meetings of the African Development Bank therefore provide a suitable platform to exchange views and seek to develop a pan-African vision for sustainable development. In this respect, I applaud the central theme you have chosen for your discussions, namely, "Africa’s structural transformation".

It is my hope that the recommendations you will come up with will give substance to a specific vision for the achievement of economic and social development - one that will enable African countries to strengthen their position vis-à-vis their partners and boost development for the benefit of their citizens.

To achieve this vision, we must root out the causes of national and regional conflicts so that peace may prevail throughout Africa. Just as important is the need to launch major projects at the level of sub-regional groupings, and to ensure the sustainability and optimal management of our resources, for the mutual benefit of our populations.

To this end, we should develop a targeted industrialization policy based on the human resources and raw materials available in order to increase business and professional expertise across the production and manufacturing value chain, and not be mere suppliers of raw materials. The success of such a policy requires appropriate infrastructure development that effectively puts us on the map of regional and global trade.

Secondly, it is essential to ensure food security for all our African peoples and to reduce our dependence in this domain through the creation of a common African agricultural market.

Finally, we should promote support and assistance programs to reduce social and spatial inequalities and ensure inclusive, shared growth.

Needless to say, such an ambitious project is complex. However, it can be achieved provided there is strong political will, constant mobilization and civic engagement on the part of the various economic, political and social stakeholders.

The long-term strategy adopted recently by the African Development Bank answers the imperative need to increase support for African countries. We welcome this strategy and hope it will promote inclusive growth and facilitate a smooth transition to the green economy. Inclusiveness and sustainability - which have been identified as top priorities by the Bank - are key elements for the achievement of a meaningful structural transformation of African economies.
In this regard, I wish to call upon the Bank to continue providing valuable support for infrastructure development, and to back the structural reforms needed for the modernization and transformation of our economies.

I also wish to call on the Bank to increase support for the private sector to give it the means it needs to play its role as an engine of growth in Africa by, for example, encouraging public-private partnerships.

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Under my supervision, Morocco has implemented a proactive policy in export-oriented industries. This has made it possible to develop large investment projects together with international partners in promising areas such as the automotive and aeronautic sectors.

Allow me, in this respect, to express my thanks to the African Development Bank for the confidence it has always placed in my country, making Morocco the Bank’s first partner. The AfDB’s involvement in Morocco is fully in line with the priorities we set in my country’s development policy. To me, the remarkable continuity of our cooperation is testimony to the Bank’s unreserved confidence not only in the relevance of the choices we have made, but also in the manner in which we implement our projects and reforms. It also attests to Morocco’s confidence in the Bank as a solid, reliable and strategic ally for the achievement of economic and social development in my country.

The Bank has made significant contributions to our economic infrastructure projects, to the strengthening of our production capacity and to the implementation of basic reforms in the areas of transport, finance and reform of the civil service. The Bank has also supported Morocco in the implementation of major projects relating to social cohesion, the reduction of inequalities, the development of medical coverage programs, improved access to drinking water, sanitation and rural electrification. These projects are in line with the objectives identified under the National Initiative for Human Development, which I launched in 2005 and which has made it possible to ensure the social integration of vulnerable segments of the population.

The Bank also supports Morocco in ground-breaking projects for the promotion of a green economy. It has thus financed investments in wind and solar energy as well as projects under Morocco’s Green Plan, which are aimed at reducing the Kingdom’s energy and food dependency.

The great ambitions I nurture for my people are closely linked to the lofty goals I wish to see achieved across Africa. The visit I paid, last March, to three countries in West and Central Africa reflects the special importance I attach to strengthening cooperation and partnership relations with sister African nations. It also shows how
keenly I look forward to the achievement of advanced regional integration, so that we may ensure Africa's prosperity and increase its influence around the world.

In this regard, the internationalization of the Moroccan banking sector in Africa is a successful example of regional partnership opportunities. This trend is expected to increase thanks to the development of the Casablanca Finance City, which can become a premier finance center, providing a bridge between international funding supply on the one hand, and national and regional demand, on the other. Greater capabilities in the finance sector would be a key asset for the expansion of current cooperation relations between Morocco and sister African nations in various fields, such as telecommunications, infrastructure, housing, mining and training, and also in opening up new sectors for future growth.

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The AfDB Group would not have achieved so much had it not been for the full support it enjoys from its shareholders and the donor countries of the African Development Fund. I commend this unfailing support and wish to call on all donor countries to make sure the next replenishment of the African Development Fund is a success. This would give the Bank the means it needs to expand the many activities it has been carrying out so successfully, especially in low-income countries.

I should like to extend my warmest congratulations to the Board of Directors of the African Development Bank Group, its President and the entire staff on the encouraging results they have achieved, despite difficult regional and international circumstances. I invite them to carry on down that road because Africa needs, more than ever, a financially strong and credible institution that can not only provide support to recipient countries at any time, but also adapt to changing needs, which vary from one country to another. Seen from this perspective, it is crucial that the Bank pursue and expand the decentralization of its activities to be even more closely in touch with the realities and needs of target populations.

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Once again, welcome to Morocco. I wish you a very successful meeting and am sure you will make an important contribution to forging a new Africa.

Wassalamu alaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh.

Mohammed VI
King of Morocco

24 May 2013.