MOROCCAN PORT SECTOR: GOVERNANCE AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

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Ports competitiveness is unquestionably an essential driver of the foreign national trade development. The necessity to develop seaborne external trade bestows a central role on the national port system. That is the reason why the port sector must keep pace with the latest developments worldwide in the fields of operations techniques, improvement of port services and its adaptation to traffic and seaborne transport changes. This paper will highlight the main features of the Moroccan port sector governance and its future development prospects, that are part of a long term strategy Jointly Designed by all the stakeholders more or less connected with the port activity.

Two important topics will be covered in this paper. The first one deals with the Moroccan port sector governance introduced by the 15-02 Law in 2006, and the second with port strategy by the year 2030.

The Moroccan port sector was thoroughly restructured in 2006 with the purposes of improving foreign trade competitiveness, adapting port supply to demand and providing services to foreign trade operators helping them improve their own competitiveness. This took the form of:

(i) The principle of the uniqueness of cargo handling business, through abandonment of stevedore activity, and thus control by the same actor of the whole logistic chain from ship’s hull to goods delivery to the ultimate consignee.

(ii) The clarification of stakeholders roles and responsibilities, through the identification of three different levels of intervention: the role of sovereignty, that remains the State’s responsibility through the Port Department of the Ministry of Equipment and Transports; the port sector regulation, entrusted to the ad hoc port authority; the commercial activities, reserved to public or private entities.

(iii) The introduction of competition in the field of port handling whenever more than one handling company can be contracted with. Due to emulation, this extension of port services led to improve loading and unloading operations efficiency and to reduce port transit costs.

(iv) The professionalization of actors resulting from targeted and operational training support for the port operators human resources.
Working in this new port system produced immediate positive results on economic stakeholders, since its impact is already felt by operators at every level, through costs reduction, procedures simplification and port investment increase. Since the entry into force of the ports reform, the Moroccan ports tool has been enriched with developmental projects, aiming at increasing the ports capacities and upgrading their infrastructures, equipments and facilities.

Given its highly strategic nature for the Kingdom foreign trade, and with the purpose so as to ensure the continuity of the results obtained through the newly implemented governance mode, the Moroccan port sector has set up for the next twenty years, a development ambitious strategy, closely coordinated with the various sectorial strategies and the spatial and environmental planning policies.

The purpose of this strategy is to provide the nation with efficient ports, catalysts for national competitiveness, regional land development drivers, and front-line players for Morocco positioning as logistic platform for the Mediterranean. Based on the pole port concept, the main aims of port strategy for year 2030 include: support economic dynamics, strengthen Morocco presence on its two maritime coastlines, contribute to the Kingdom great regional balances and favour human and social development.