

MOROCCO'S TOURISM: THE CRISIS PERSISTS DESPITE SLIGHT IMPROVEMENTS



Two steps back, one step forward. Such is the case of Morocco's tourism sector, which recorded an improvement in revenues during the third quarter of 2021.

Certainly, the 1,000-mile route begins with a step. The tourist receipts, which amounted to 15.9 MMDH in the third quarter of 2021, recording an increase of 202% compared to Q3-2020 according to the Directorate of Studies and Financial Forecasts (DEPF), **can be seen by some as a glimmer of hope for a better future of the national tourism sector and towards a rebirth after a state of the agony of more than 20 months.** However, these revenues signal for others, and given the 40.2% drop, they represent compared to the same period of the year 2019, a persistent suffocating crisis whose termination is dependent on a government initiative.

In this context, the president of the Regional Council of Tourism (CRT) of the Casablanca-Settat region, Othman Chérif Alami, stated that "following the efforts made by HM the King against the pandemic, it is time for the government to do the same for an economic recovery. Tourism and all related sectors have experienced a huge drop of 90% in 2021 compared to 2019, 60% of hotels are currently closed in Agadir and 40% closed in Marrakech".

Alami did not fail to address the new government which is, according to him, "required to give us a message of confidence, the head of the government must take into consideration the 5 million citizens working in Morocco's tourism sector and spread over various regions of the Kingdom, especially the most sensitive ones such as Marrakech, Fez, Essaouira, Taroudant or Casablanca, which are still suffering from the repercussions of the sanitary crisis. He also emphasized the major role that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs must play to dispel the image that some tourists have of Morocco as a country with a high risk of contamination, and this by changing the international communication that he described as "extremely weak".

To remedy the situation, Alami called on the government to set up a fund capable of supporting companies that risk declaring bankruptcy at the end of the year. **"These companies, if ever tourists arrive in Morocco, will be unable to fulfil their commitments given the financial crisis that is suffocating them,"** he hammered, adding about the New Year, a tourist event par excellence in Morocco, that "only 15 or 20 hotels in Marrakech and Agadir will be solicited, for the rest, no dynamics are planned.

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