



# Morocco

## Morocco: Introduction

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Chart 1: Political map of Morocco

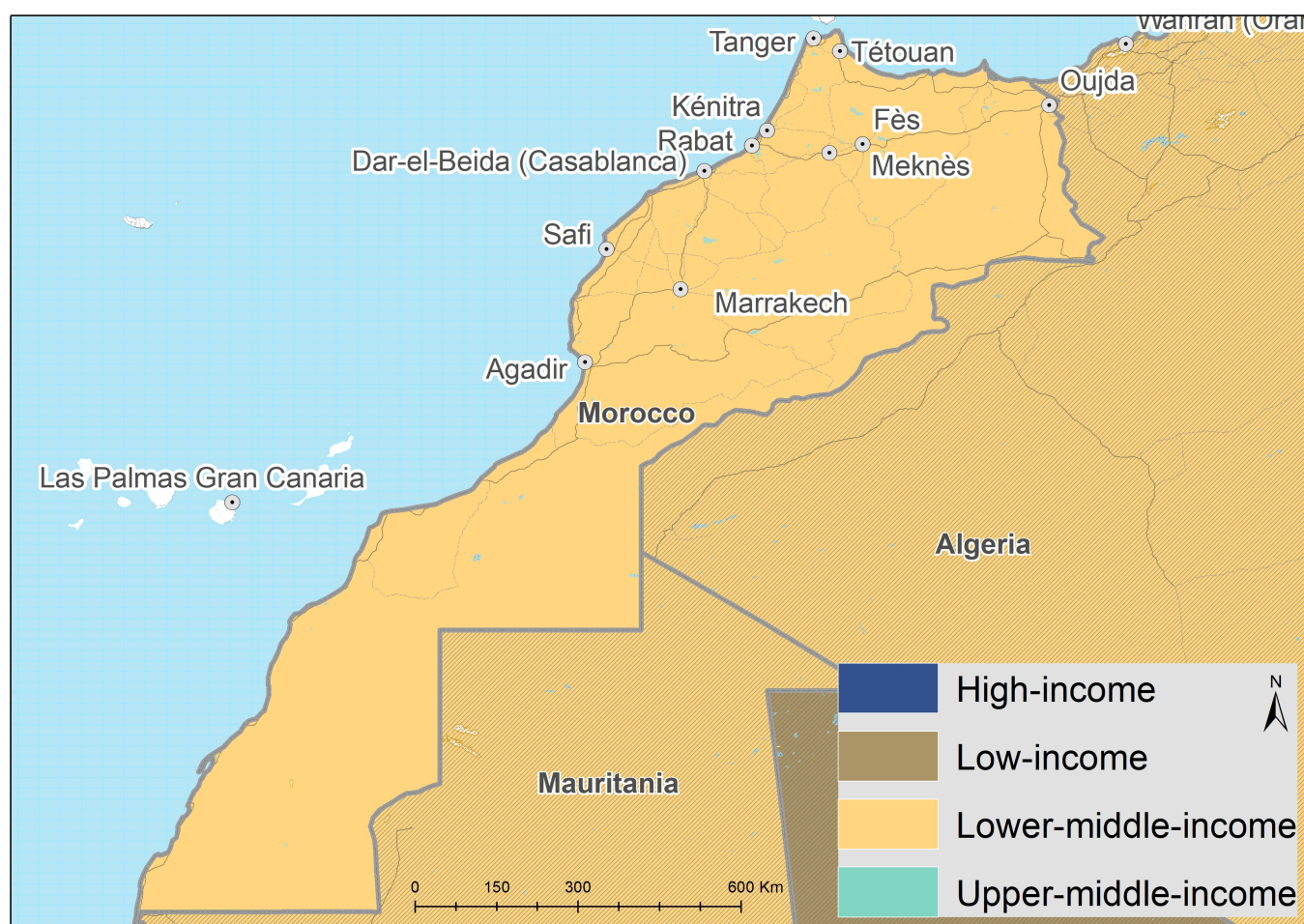


Chart 1 is a political map of Morocco.

The Kingdom of Morocco is the only African country with Atlantic and Mediterranean coastlines, totalling 1 835 km. It is also the only African country with a land border with the European Union, namely with the tiny Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla both on the northern shores of Morocco's Mediterranean coast. Morocco's land area covers approximately 446 300 km<sup>2</sup>. In 2019, the country had a population of about 36.5 million people. Its official and predominant religion is Islam, and the **official languages** are Arabic and Tamazight, spoken by the Berber people, which became an official language in 2011. The Moroccan dialects of Arabic and French are also widely spoken.

Morocco claims ownership of the territory of Western Sahara, a sparsely populated area of mostly desert and a former Spanish colony that is rich in phosphates and fisheries. **Western Sahara** was annexed by Morocco in 1975 and has since been the subject of a long-running territorial dispute between Morocco, its indigenous Saharawi people, led by the Polisario Front and neighbouring Algeria. After Spain's departure, Morocco and Mauritania partitioned the territory. In 1979, Mauritania withdrew from the territory. Over time Rabat solidified control over the area with the Polisario Front retaining control over some 20%. A UN-mediated Settlement Plan includes a ceasefire, a buffer zone and a provision for a referendum. Morocco's stance on the **Western Sahara** is that it is an integral part of its territory and it has proposed a plan for limited autonomy and a degree of self-government for Sahrawis, provided it remains under Moroccan sovereignty.

Morocco is also in dispute with Spain over the territories of Ceuta, Penon de Velez de la Gomera and Melilla.

Morocco's largest city and port is Casablanca; however, the capital city is Rabat. Morocco is a unitary semi-constitutional monarchy with an elected parliament. The King of Morocco and the prime minister lead the executive branch. Legislative power sits with the two chambers of parliament: the House of Representatives and the House of Councillors. Judicial power rests with the Constitutional Court.

The king holds significant executive and legislative powers, especially over the military, foreign policy and religious affairs. He can issue decrees that are de facto laws and dissolve the parliament after consulting the prime minister and the president of the Constitutional Court. See the section on governance below (charts 27 and 28) for more detail.

The country experiences a typical Mediterranean climate with mild wet winters and hot dry summers. October to April is usually the rainy season.

Morocco is expected to be severely affected by climate change, both in terms of an increase in temperature and less rain.

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## About the authors

Dr Jakkie Cilliers is the ISS's founder and former executive director. He currently serves as chair of the ISS Board of Trustees, head of the African Futures and Innovation (AFI) programme at the Pretoria office of the Institute, and is an extraordinary professor at the University of Pretoria. His 2017 best-seller *Fate of the Nation* addresses South Africa's futures from political, economic and social perspectives. His three most recent books, *Africa First! Igniting a Growth Revolution* (March 2020), *The Future of Africa: Challenges and Opportunities* (April 2021), and *Africa Tomorrow: Pathways to Prosperity* (June 2022) take a rigorous look at the continent as a whole.

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