

# AMCN Newsletter

## Quarterly Issue 1 – 2017

### Word from the President Dr. Mohamed Boutjdir



Dear AMCN Members,

First happy and prosperous new year to you and your families. The year 2016 has been unique for AMCN achievements as AMCN has been involved in several concrete and successful projects in Morocco and US. I am proud to report that these activities were led by active AMCN members and our partners in US, Morocco and Canada. To mention just a few, AMCN has been the partner of choice for Moroccan Ministries and private institutions to provide consultations and guidance on a multitude of initiatives such as:

- *Business Leaders Program* in partnership with Injaz Al Maghrib; *Startup African Summit* and ENSIAS College of Engineering at Mohamed V University. AMCN members both women and men all of whom were invited to speak, mentor or initiate an expertise specific partnership.
- Successful launch of an E-learning platform with the Office Chérifien des Phosphates (OCP) under the leadership of Mohamed Belali.
- US/Morocco Workshop on Sensors and Wireless Networks for Smart Cities sponsored by the US National Science Foundation
- Autism Project—Part 3: Data collection on the ground in Morocco in partnership with Autism Speaks, Inc. and Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) in Boston, MA.
- Organizing 1<sup>st</sup> Annual North American Moroccan Competencies Forum in partnership with *Forum des Compétences Canado-Marocaines* (FCCM), Association of Moroccan Professionals in America (AMPA), and support from Ministry of Moroccan Residing Abroad & Migration Affaires and Royal Air Maroc.

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Below, I will provide a brief summary about the autism project and the forum. More details are highlighted in other subsequent section of this newsletter.

### **Autism Project**

For those who do not know, the autism project led by Hafida Torres, a very active AMCN member of the health and biomedical group, is a project aimed at demystifying and destigmatizing autism in Morocco. After several years of preparations, this past summer, several college students and faculty members from WPI travelled to Morocco to collect data on needs of autistic parents and their perception autism. This part was undertaken under the leadership of Dr. Tahar El-Korchi, co-chair of the Education/Higher Education & Scientific Research thematic group, Haifa Torres, Autism Speaks, Inc. and several autism associations in Morocco. The data collection was conducted through interviews with families in Casablanca, Taroudant, Agadir, Biougra, Ouarzazate, Skoura and Tiznit. The findings indicate limited availability and lack of access to resources, support networks, and trained medical staff. The final report intends to raise awareness about autism spectrum disorder in Morocco and to draw the attention of the Moroccan authorities to this worldwide challenging disorder. I want to take this opportunity to express AMCN gratitude and appreciation to the autism team for this outstanding and first time ever systematic study on autism in Morocco.

### **Competencies Forum**

With the financial support of the Ministry of Moroccans Residing Abroad & Migration Affairs and Royal Air Maroc, AMCN, FCCM and AMPA organized the first forum of competencies in North America that was held in the great city of New York, September 17, 2016 with the presence of Mr. Khalifa Ait Chaib, deputy consul representing the Consulate General of Morocco in New York. One hundred participants were in attendance from Canada and the United States representing California, Washington, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Texas, Washington DC, Massachusetts, New Jersey and New York. This initiative was years in the making by AMCN leadership intended to unite the forces of Moroccan competencies in order to broaden our networks, strengthen the dialogue and exchanges between us and also enable us to effectively contribute more vigorously to the development of Morocco and the establishment of bridges between Morocco and North America. High-caliber Moroccan professionals, members of these organizations, presented in discussion panels, their experiences in various fields and suggested specific recommendations, based on the Moroccan reality.

A key highlight of the forum was the joint signature of a memorandum of understanding for collaboration and partnership between AMCN, FCCM and AMPA and the commitment to hold the 2<sup>nd</sup> forum in September of 2017 in Montreal, Canada.

# Autism Project

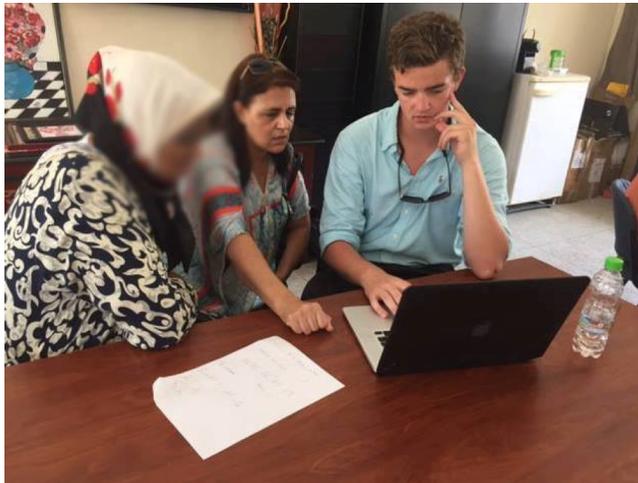
Project Leader: Ms. Hafida Torres



**September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016** – A team from Worcester Polytechnic Institute conducted data collection studies on Autism in Tiznit, Ouarzazate and Casablanca, Morocco with the collaboration of AMCN, Autism Speaks, and other Moroccan NGOs. This study took place from August to October 2016 and had 200 families participating. The aim is to generate a report about the needs of the families who have children with autism. This study comes as part of the World Summit recommendations on autism organized by AMCN in December 2014 in Rabat, and continuation of the awareness seminars and educational training the team conducted through 2016.

This data collection effort was a great initiative that generated a report about autism in Morocco which is going to be published soon and will be a great autism awareness campaign.

**November 13-14, 2016** – Autism Speaks Advocacy Leadership Network invited two associations from Morocco to participate officially at the international ALN meeting which was held in Washington DC, with the participation of 45 countries from different continents. AMCN and Autism Speaks invited association Amal presented by Touria Mabrook and Attahadi represented by Khadija Balaliloui. AMCN presented an update of the research and the educational trainings conducted in Morocco since the inception of the autism project on 2012.



For more information about the Autism project in Tiznit, please visit: <http://www.tiznit37.com/?p=35977>

# American Moroccan Competencies Forum

## New York, September 17, 2016



2016 was the year of the first concrete step to unite the forces of Moroccan competencies in North America. Indeed, last September, AMCN was pleased to join forces with the Association of Moroccan Professionals in America (AMPA), and the Forum des Competences Canado-Marocaines (FCCM). The ultimate purpose of this union was to mobilize the Moroccan competencies in North America and to create a platform that will facilitate the contribution of Moroccans Living Abroad into the development process in Morocco, especially in the following areas: Entrepreneurship and innovation in the aeronautics and automotive industries, Energy, Medical sciences, Economy, as well as Civil society and related matters.

During this day, high-level professionals and members of these associations, shared their experiences and suggested specific recommendations.

In this context, Mr. Zouhair Lazreq, engineering director at "On-Highway Driveline Technologies" and expert in the automotive industry, pointed out that the Moroccan economy is evolving from a three-sector system (agriculture, tourism and services) to an industrial economy including automotive, aeronautics and fertilizers derived from phosphate. This progressive evolution requires, according to him, a significant investment in research and development. On the other side, Ms. Souad Elmallem, Executive Partner at 6temik, highlighted the considerable development of aeronautics in Morocco, with the 10-fold increase within 10 years in all indicators of this sector. However, Ms. Elmallem pointed out the lack of middle management which had to be corrected.

According to Mr. Chaouki Zahzah, President of AMPA, Energy is another area where innovation is required to the utmost, and Morocco must evolve from a "technology buyer" to a "technology producer" through education and innovation. He emphasized that the high cost of energy in Morocco is a brake on development. Hence Morocco needs to diversify sources, particularly turning waste into energy.

Medical research and drug development, another field of high importance, was represented by a panel of high-caliber health professionals including Dr. Mohamed Boutjdir, Professor at State University of New York, Dr. Mohcine Alami, Director of Medical Security at Population Council, Dr. Hicham Fenniri, Professor at Northeastern University, and Dr. Rachid Assina, neurosurgeon at the Rutgers Neurological Institute. The members of the panel described the extremely long, complex and costly process of drug creation and approval. They also discussed the importance of the application of other scientific disciplines to health care, and the critical link between education, clinical practice and research.

The economy field was represented by Ms. Mariama Zhouri, Associate director at HammerSmith Consulting, Mr. Manaf Bouchentouf, Executif director at La Banque Nationale du Canada and Mr. Houda Rabah, Analytics director at MetLife. The expert group discussed the process of creation and development of startups and other critical issues related to digital marketing. Mr. Amine Bentahar and Ms. Loubna Kadiri Hassani, experts in Digital Marketing, and Ms. Sara Amiri, a social entrepreneur, presented their projects in their respective fields.

Finally, Ms. Naima Remmak and Ms. Souad Kiram, social activists, presented a panel of activities organized for the poor communities, especially for the Moroccan and immigrant community.



S. Elmallem, Z. Lazreq and C. Zahzah



M. Boutjdir and K. Touijer



L. Kadiri Hassani, S. Amiri, and A. Bentahar



More pictures are available on our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/amcnusa/>

## ePowerIdeas



<https://www.linkedin.com/in/hassan-mousaid-0b32358>

Mr. Hassan Mousaid, creator of ePowerIdeas – an accelerator of startups, attended several events in Morocco to present his accelerator idea to ENSIAS, Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Informatique et d'Analyse des Systèmes and other schools and universities in Morocco. Through his ePowerIdeas concept and methodology, Mr. Mousaid helps higher institutions and universities create a physical and a virtual environment where students, faculty members and member of the society to connect with each other, share recommendation and find expert help, answers and resources.

The ePowerIdeas is following the same concept of Harvard i-lab and MIT eLab. Mr. Mousaid is a graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and he is currently a Professor in Computer Science and a Sr. Research Scientist. For more information on ePowerIdeas, please contact Hassan Mousaid at [hassan.mousaid@sloan.mit.edu](mailto:hassan.mousaid@sloan.mit.edu).



## Announcements & Ongoing Projects

### JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Become an active member by joining us online on [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#) and benefit from a vast network of Moroccan professionals in a variety of fields and learn about current and upcoming initiatives in Morocco and US.

### JOIN THE ICT COMMITTEE

Are you an experienced Information Technology or Web professional? AMCN is seeking help to update and maintain our website and server, as well as provide technical support when needed. If interested, contact us at [info@amcnusa.org](mailto:info@amcnusa.org)

### BECOME A NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTOR

Do you enjoy researching topics and writing? We are seeking content developers for the AMCN website and quarterly newsletter. If interested, drop us a line at [info@amcnusa.org](mailto:info@amcnusa.org).

### COMING SOON

2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the North American Moroccan Competencies Forum

Stay tuned for more details on this year's forum which will take place in September 2017 in Montreal, Canada.