Under the high patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, may Allah assist him
Under the high patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, may Allah assist him.
Celebration of Rabat as 2022 Culture Capital in the Islamic World

As part of ICESCO’s “Programme for Culture Capitals in the Islamic World”, and in appreciation of the pivotal role played by the city of Rabat in shaping the ancient and recent political, civilizational and cultural history of Morocco, the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization initiated the proposal to celebrate Rabat as 2022 Culture Capital in the Islamic World.

His Majesty King Mohammed VI has graciously granted his royal approval for the organization of this event, which reflects the particular attention he accords to Rabat, “City of Lights, Cultural Capital of Morocco.”

The Moroccan Monarch has kindly instructed all relevant governmental sectors to coordinate and cooperate with ICESCO General Directorate to ensure the success of this event to be held on the banks of the Bouregreg River, a place that has witnessed a major cultural and urban renaissance during his Majesty’s reign, thus reinforcing Rabat’s outstanding civilizational, historical and international prominence.

Proclaiming Rabat as 2022 Culture Capital in the Islamic World is a recognition of the historical and civilizational prominence of the city that has been hosting ICESCO’s headquarters since its inception thirty-nine (39) years ago, and a reinforcement of the resolution of the 11th Conference of Culture Ministers in the Islamic World on the inscription of Rabat on the Islamic World Heritage List in 2019. This proclamation coincides with the transformation in ICESCO’s “Programme for Culture Capitals in the Islamic World” as part of the Organization’s new vision geared towards celebrating major cultural cities in the Islamic world as well as combining the valorization of the rich Islamic cultural heritage and the establishment of new cultural spaces and infrastructures for the wide public, thereby contributing to urban development.

There are numerous features that have qualified Rabat to be celebrated as Culture Capital in the Islamic World par excellence. The city has always been a major civilizational and cultural crossroad. UNESCO inscribed Rabat on its World Heritage List in 2012 thanks to its archaeological and urban landmarks that bear witness to its long-standing history.

The city brought notable contributions to various areas of culture through the works of its scientists, authors, intellectuals and artists, and inspired several international painters throughout the ages.

Rabat is home to numerous public and private universities, scientific research centers, libraries, museums, cultural and artistic institutions, festivals and exhibitions, which are all important destinations for researchers and people interested in science, culture and knowledge from all over the world.
Rabat’s most emblematic monuments

- Chella

Chella represents one of the oldest archaeological sites in Morocco. The site was originally established by the Phoenicians in the 6th century BC as a trading center on the Atlantic Ocean. Later it became an ancient colony for Roman traders in the 3rd century AD. During the 13th and 14th centuries, Chella became a royal cemetery for the Marinids who built several buildings including a mosque and a school which represent the distinguished architectural art of the Marinid dynasty. They enclosed Chella by a five-sided rampart flanked by twenty oblong towers and encompassing three gates, the largest and most ornate of which is the main gate of the site overlooking the Almohad enclosure of Ribat al-Fath.

- The Almohad enclosure

This enclosure was built in the 12th century AD, and it represents some of the specificities of Almohad architecture. The enclosure is 5,263 m long and stretches from the west side to the south side of Rabat. It is 2.40 m thick, 10 m high, with 74 towers and five large gates, the most important of which is Bab Rouah, which is an exhibition of artifacts.
The Andalusian enclosure

This enclosure represents some of the specificities of Andalusian architecture, as it was built in the 17th century by the Moors after they moved from Andalusia to Morocco. The 2400-meter long enclosure extends from the south to the east of the city. The Andalusian enclosure contains twenty-six (26) oblong towers similar to the Almohad enclosure.

The Kasbah of the Udayas

This kasbah combines the specificities of Almoravid, Almohad, Moorish-Andalusian and Alawite architecture. It was originally built as a fortress by the Almoravids in the 12th century at the mouth of the Bouregreg river. After becoming a ribat under the Almohad dynasty, Udayas was settled by the Moors coming from Andalusia in the 17th century. During the Alawite era, the Kasbah witnessed the establishment of various buildings namely Jamaa el Atiq and Borj Sqala.

🔗 The Hassan Mosque

The Hassan Mosque is one of Rabat’s most emblematic monuments. Built by the Almohad Sultan Yaqub al-Mansur, the monument was intended to be the largest of its type, but this ambitious project stopped after the Sultan’s death in 1199. The mosque was destroyed due to an earthquake in 1755. Its ruins bear witness to the extent of the original building which is 180-meter long and 140-meter wide. The mosque’s 44-meters high minaret, the Hassan tower, resembles the Koutoubia Tower in Marrakesh and Giralda Tower in Seville. The tower is ascended by spiral ramps leading to the top and is formed of six levels, each containing a chamber. Different ornaments and engravings adorn the carved stone covering the tower, reflecting the Andalusian-Maghrebi architecture of the 12th century.
The city of Rabat also hosts multiple new generation development projects that have been completed or are under construction as part of the Program “Rabat City of Lights, Cultural Capital of Morocco” to make Rabat an important cultural and artistic destination.

Saint Peter’s Cathedral

Built in 1919 in the Art Deco architectural tradition, Saint Peter’s Cathedral is a Roman Catholic church located in the center of Rabat. It is the ecclesiastical seat of the Archdiocese of Rabat. Its construction started in 1919 and was inaugurated in 1921. Its two towers were constructed in 1930. Rabat’s Christian community meets in the cathedral for the daily mass.

Mohammed VI Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art

Mohammed VI Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art is the first museum in the Kingdom to specialize in modern and contemporary art. It was established in October 2014, at the center of Rabat, to meet international standards for museums. The museum’s architecture represents the close relationship between the city’s architectural form and content.

Since its establishment, Mohammed VI Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art has hosted works by prominent artists, international exhibitions and many Moroccan creators, as part of a dynamic approach combining tourism and culture, as they are synonymous with discovery and openness to art and creativity.
**The Grand Theater**

The Grand Theater in Rabat is located in a vast space not far from two historical landmarks, the Hassan Tower and the Mausoleum of Mohammed V. It is considered one of the masterpieces of the international designer, Zaha Hadid. The design was inspired by the Moroccan architectural heritage and combined the latest technical developments in this field. Rabat’s Grand Theater is the largest theater in Africa and the Arab world. It is not only a major contribution to the Moroccan cultural scene but also a symbol of the cultural and artistic renaissance of the capital of the Kingdom.

**Mohammed VI Tower**

Mohammed VI Tower is located on the right bank of the Bouregreg River, which separates the capital, Rabat, from the city of Salé. The 250-meter high and 35-meter wide tower is considered the tallest tower in Africa and is a symbol of Morocco’s modernity and an architectural landmark that highlights the richness of Morocco’s architecture.

**The National Museum of Archeology and Earth Sciences**

The project of the National Museum of Archeology and Earth Sciences came within the framework of a royal initiative aimed at having a national museum with high standards that would enable visitors to discover the rich and ancient history of the Kingdom of Morocco through its natural and cultural heritage.

The National Museum of Archeology and Earth Sciences will be established in the gardens of the Lyautey Residence, which used to house Morocco’s French administrator, on an area of about 7 hectares within the city center of Rabat in a rich cultural environment close to Bouregreg Valley and the archaeological site of Chella.