ADDRESS BY

HER ROYAL HIGHNESS PRINCESS LALLA SALMA

AT THE CEREMONY COMMEMORATING THE 50th ANNIVERSARY OF

 THE INTERNATIONAL AGENCY FOR RESEARCH ON CANCER

LYON, 15 MAY 2015

**Your Royal Highness,**

**Honourable Ministers,**

**The Honorable Mayor of Greater Lyon,**

**Dr. Christopher Wild, Director of the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC),**

**Dr Mark Palmer, Chair of the current session of the IARC Governing Council,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a great pleasure for me to participate in this ceremony marking the 50th anniversary of the International Agency for Research on Cancer.

I am very pleased to be in the beautiful capital of the Rhône-Alpes region, which is renowned not only for its rich heritage, including its refined gastronomy, but also for the quality of its medical facilities and its care and research centers. In this specific domain, Lyon has given France eminent scientists like Claude Bernard, the founder of experimental medicine.

I am delighted to have been invited to this event as guest of honor.

I do not think I need to remind the audience of the role IARC has been playing to promote international cooperation in the area of research on cancer, nor of the quality of the work it has been carrying out since its inception to shed light on the burden that this scourge represents. Thanks to its outstanding contribution, IARC has become a world reference for cancer epidemiology data.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I see the wish expressed by Morocco to be admitted to this prestigious institution as a crowning event, given my country’s efforts to fight cancer, which have resulted in Morocco’s involvement in cancer research. By mobilizing the public and the private sectors, civil society and the media, Morocco has set itself the task of developing and implementing, in ten years’ time, a coherent, integrated strategy in this area.

Indeed, reflecting this general involvement, all our actions, in such areas as social support for patients, prevention, the construction of hospitals, widespread access to medicines, cost reduction and palliative care at home, are in line with the human development strategy outlined by His Majesty King Mohammed VI.

The Foundation I am honored to chair has played a key role in the design and formulation of the National Cancer Prevention and Control Plan for the period 2010-2019. The Plan comprises 78 measures, 72 of which were implemented in 5 years.  Research is part of all of the Plan’s strategic axes, and we can say there has been a quantum leap in terms of access to care: of the 35,000 new cases which are expected according to the cancer registry, nearly 32,000 cancer patients will now have access to care (as against only 11,000 in 2005). We are proud of these results, the more so as all needy patients who report to public cancer centers have access to care free of charge.

In addition to national stakeholders’ concerted efforts, our National Plan has proven to be effective thanks not only to international cooperation, but also to other parties’ experience in the field. In this respect, the Agency, especially Dr. Sankar’s precious contribution, deserve special mention. With his help, we have developed a method for the detection of cervical cancer which is adapted to our environment, using an approach that combines screening, diagnosis and treatment simultaneously. Thanks to this method, thousands of Moroccan women have benefited from screening and treatment.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Although the quantitative aspect is important, we have been laying more emphasis on quality. Indeed, we firmly believe that in everything we do, the patient must remain our foremost concern.

To achieve the level of quality we aspire to, the Foundation has invested in research and in human resource training, both of which are crucial to the success of our programs. The Foundation thus gives grants to researchers and invites proposals for projects to fund research work. It also promotes partnerships to pool stakeholder efforts and create synergies conducive to the promotion of scientific research.

Thanks to this approach, we have set up the Cancer Research Institute in Fez, which is the result of a partnership with the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Executive Training and the Ministry of Health. Having public benefit status, the Institute will, we hope, become a model academic cancer research institution for the MENA region. Its prime mission is to boost and support research and have an impact at national and international levels.

Morocco realizes the importance of research and its impact on actions to fight cancer. That is why we believe research will provide a beacon of hope throughout the world and help harness international cooperation to tackle a public health issue that knows no boundaries. I am aware that the immense disparities currently existing between the North and the South will not disappear overnight. However, I am convinced that those gaps could, at the very least, be narrowed if we make research readily accessible. It is incumbent upon all of us in this interdependent world to seek solutions.

As a civil society representative, I urge the scientific community and researchers to place patients at the heart of research and scientific discoveries.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

For several years now, and at all the meetings I have attended, I have consistently called for an international cancer fund to be set to support the efforts of countries with limited resources, like the HIV-AIDS Fund, which has made it possible to achieve good results. Surely the time has come to make the fight against cancer a global health policy priority. Is it not time the international community realized the devastating effects this scourge has on poor countries?

I hope the International Agency for Research on Cancer - which is known for its resolute action, its commitment to global cooperation and, above all, its independence - will back this call to alleviate the suffering of patients worldwide.

Thank you.