HIGHLIGHTS ON ARGANIA:

The Argan tree—scientifically recognized as *Argania spinosa* L. Skeels—is an extremely rare tree that is indigenous to Morocco.

Due to its extraordinary characteristics, it is considered one of Morocco’s miraculous resources. Its traditional uses and benefits range from forestry and food to medicine and cosmetics.

The Argania Spinosa is believed to be one of the few surviving relict-breed species of the Tertiary Period (spanned between 65 million to 1.8 million years ago). Thus, the uniqueness and symbolism of this 65 million year old tree is mainly due to its amazing ability to withstand long periods of drought, heat, the chalky poor soil and extremely harsh conditions.

The Argan tree is found in an intramontane area covering more than 2,560,000 hectares.

EVENT BACKGROUND:

Argania, practices and know-how concerning the Argan tree, which was classified as intangible cultural heritage of humanity by UNESCO in 2014, is an integral part of the ancestral intangible capital of Morocco.

This UNESCO’s nomination is a strong recognition of the know-how passed on from one generation to another, mainly by the Moroccan rural women who preserved the economic, social and environmental dimension of this tree.

Additionally, in December 2018, an Argan-based agro-pastoral system of Morocco was recognized by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) as Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS), given the uniqueness of this system.

Therefore, the Argan tree, an endemic woodland species found solely in the Arganeraie Biosphere Reserve of Morocco, is a typical multi-purpose tree that plays a key role in achieving sustainable development:

1. The various productions of the Argan plantation provide more than 20 million working days, including 7.5 million annual working days by women working on the pressure of Argan fruits;

2. The Argan trees cultivation’s system is based on agroforestry practices in dry stone terraces being highly resilient to arid environment, water scarcity and soil erosion;

3. The Argan cultivation system uses only locally adapted species and pastoralism activities and relies on a traditional water management provided by the Matfiya- a rain water reservoir carved into a rock;

4. The Argan processing and production (namely Argan oil, both cosmetic and culinary, Argan paste "Amlou" and all other Argan derivatives help create numerous job opportunities, especially for rural women, and consequently promote poverty eradication;
5. The production of Argan oil represents a very important economic resource for many Moroccan cooperatives. They have fair trade practices and contribute to the economic empowerment of rural women in particular;

6. Argan is also used for its antidiabetic activity in local traditional medicine, and some parts of the plant are used to prepare remedies against various diseases;

7. Some recent medical studies suggest that the Argan oil could play a beneficial role in cardiovascular diseases prevention.

**EVENT OBJECTIVES:**

Bearing in mind all the previous elements, the Kingdom of Morocco is honored to organize, in collaboration with FAO, UNESCO, UN-DESA and WHO, a high level side event that aims to explore the potential of Argania Tree and the Argan production sector in achieving sustainable development.

This side event aims to:

1. **Introduce** to Member States the benefits and properties of Argania tree derived products, in particular their various health, cosmetic and culinary uses;

2. **Recognize** that the Argan tree represents more than 7 million annual working days for Moroccan people. The population living on Argan production, in a direct or indirect way, is around 3 million Moroccans.

3. **Present** the economic, social, ecological and developmental dimensions of the production of Argan;

4. **Identify** the societal dimension of Argan production and its contribution to sustainable development, particularly in rural regions (SDGs relating to poverty eradication, decent work and economic growth (job creation and woman empowerment), good health and well-being, climate action...etc);

5. **Highlight** the recognition of Argan tree by UNESCO, in 2014, on the Representative List of Heritage, as well as the recognition of the agro-pastoral system of Argania by the FAO, in 2018, as Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS).

**TENTATIVE PROGRAM:**

**MODERATOR:** Mr. Werner OBERMEYER, Executive Director a.i. of the WHO Office at the UN in New York;

**LIST OF SPEAKERS:**

3:00-3:10: Opening remarks by H.E.M. Omar HILALE, the Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco to the United Nations;

3:10-3:15: Video Shooting about Argania;

3:15-3:25: Presentation by Mrs. Latifa YAAKOUBI, Head of the Argan Zones Development Directorate, Moroccan Ministry of Agriculture;

3:25-3:35: Intervention, Mrs. Carla MUCAVI, Director of the FAO Liaison Office to the United Nations in New York;

3:35-3:45: Intervention by Mrs. Marie Paul ROUDIL, Director of the UNESCO Liaison Office in New York ;

3:45-3:55: Intervention by Mr. Hamid Rashid, Chief, Development Research Branch, UN-DESA;

3:55- 4:05: Intervention by Mrs. Jamila IDBOURROUS, Argan Women Cooperatives Union;

4:05-4:50: Interactive discussion;

4:50-5:00: Closing Remarks by H.E.M. Omar HILALE