



# PORTNET

SPECIAL REPORT

thebusiness|year

# THE BUSINESS YEAR

## PORTNET SPECIAL REPORT

**T**he world's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, with lockdowns and border closures, had a significant impact on trade. Where once the constancy of freight ships delivering goods and raw materials all over the world had been taken for granted, the fragility of globalized supply chains was laid bare.

In reaction to this impact, the consensus was that a new approach to the sector had to be found. Priority was given to streamlining logistics services in order to ameliorate and mitigate the pandemic's shock.

In Morocco, the logistics sector has had a particular incentive to develop. Straddling two of the world's most important shipping zones, at the intersection of the Atlantic and Mediterranean, it is through Morocco that trade finds its way from Europe to Africa or toward the Levant and vice versa.

The Business Year has been privileged to partner with one of the most instrumental agents in driving the modernization of the logistics sector; PortNet. PortNet provides digital communication and integration between economic operators and suppliers of both public and private services, with the objective of improving the indicators of

efficiency, agility, and ease of operation in the area of import and export of goods.

Created in 2009 as a pioneer project in the Moroccan Ministry of Transport with the Moroccan National Ports Agency (ANP), over the last decade PortNet was early to adopt an approach and attitude to drive the digitalization of Morocco's logistics sector. Its efforts culminated in the creation of an innovative digital tool that has been key to continually modernizing Morocco's logistics sector—the Single Window. Put in place in 2011, this tool has grown enormously and PortNet can proudly boast a portfolio of innovative services. With more than 120 fully digital community solutions, PortNet brings a real competitive advantage to more than 55,000 users from different backgrounds.

The vision of creating value and accelerating digital transformation has led to the creation of an entire ecosystem, one that is represented within this report. With representatives from the banking sector, maritime authorities international, and Moroccan shipping agents, port operators, and more, TBY brings insights from across the ecosystem that lays out the recent challenges and the opportunities on the horizon. ✖

**2**

From the editor's desk

**4**Nadia Laraki,  
General Manager,  
National Ports Agency (ANP)

• Interview

**5**Youssef Ahouzi,  
Director General & Acting CEO,  
PortNet S.A • Interview**7**Saïd Maghraoui Hassani,  
Director of Defense and  
Trade Regulations,  
Ministry of Industry and Trade  
• Interview**8**A Window on Tomorrow  
• Focus: Challenges to international trade**9**Hassan Sentissi,  
President, ASMEX • Interview**10**Hicham Mellakh,  
President, Logistics Competitiveness Commission,  
CGEM • Interview**11**Abdelaziz Mantrach  
President, Professional Association of Maritime  
Agents, Consignees, and Ship Brokers Chartering of  
Morocco (APRAM) • Interview**11**Rachid Tahri  
President, Association of Freight Forwarding of  
Morocco (AFFM) • Interview**13**Rachid Kamal  
Executive Director - Group Services and Processing  
Attijariwafa bank • Interview**13**Noureddine Lahmamssi  
President, Association of Authorized Customs Brokers  
in Morocco (ATADM) • Interview**14**

The Smart Move • Focus: The logistics sector

**16**Isidore Biyiha  
President, African Alliance for Electronic Commerce  
(AAEC) • Interview**16**Hans Rook,  
Chairman, International Port Community Systems  
Association (IPCSA) • InterviewRead more at [thebusinessyear.com/morocco](http://thebusinessyear.com/morocco)

The Business Year is published by The Business Year International, Trident Chambers, P.O. Box 146, Road Town, Tortola, British Virgin Islands. The Business Year is a registered trademark of The Business Year International, Copyright The Business Year International Inc. 2020. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrievable system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopied, recorded, or otherwise without prior permission of The Business Year International Inc. The Business Year International Inc. has made every effort to ensure that the content of this publication is accurate at the time of printing. The Business Year International Inc. makes no warranty, representation, or undertaking, whether expressed or implied, nor does it assume any legal liability, direct or indirect, or responsibility for the accuracy, completeness, or usefulness of any information contained in this publication. The paper used in the production of this publication comes from well-managed sources.

CEO  
Ayşe Valentin  
Regional Director  
Carlos Martinez  
Country Manager  
Myriem Dahlab  
Associate Editor  
Benjamin Macshane  
Editorial  
Terry Whitlam, Aidan McMahon



ISBN 978-1-912498-86-4  
[www.thebusinessyear.com](http://www.thebusinessyear.com)





# SMOOTH SAILING

Nadia Laraki  
GENERAL MANAGER,  
NATIONAL PORTS AGENCY (ANP)

**Morocco's ports are vital for its foreign commerce, and as such the ANP is at the cutting edge of global trends to ensure the smooth operations of the country's crucial maritime hubs.**

## BIO

Nadia Laraki took up her post in 2010. She has significant experience heading up ports in Casablanca and Mohammedia. She also occupied a position at the Ministry of Transport. She has a degree in engineering from the National School of Bridges and Roads in Paris and an MBA from the Graduate Business School of Paris.

## How has ANP developed since its creation in 2007?

The ANP was established in 2007 as part of the implementation of port sector reform, which is based on a clear separation of missions between the different actors according to the "Land-lord Port" model. The Moroccan Ports Authority (ANP)'s vision is to federate all the stakeholders of the port ecosystem to improve Moroccan port competitiveness, and consequently Moroccan economy competitiveness, since 98% of the country's foreign trade flows through its ports. Since its creation, the ANP has accomplished several large-scale projects relating to (i) the upgrading of port infrastructures by mobilizing investments of more than USD2 billion, (ii) the establishment of a new governance model of the sector through the encouragement of the intervention of private operators in port activities, and (iii) the strengthening of the digitalization and dematerialization of port processes through PortNet, the port community system of Moroccan ports. Nowadays, it is obvious that the national port sector has marked a qualitative leap with performance levels that have nothing to envy of the largest ports internationally.

**Over the past 18 months, the pandemic has presented an unprecedented challenge and the world has experienced a downturn in trade. What have been the main challenges for the port sector and ANP?**

Since the outbreak of the health crisis related to COVID-19, all the actors of the Moroccan port ecosystem have mobilized to set up a port activities continuity plan, as well as precautionary measures to face the pandemic risk and keep all port services operational. As shown by activity figures (+5.1% at the end of 2020), Moroccan ports have succeeded in this challenge with great agility and resilience, fully assuming their role as platforms at the service of the national economy. I must highlight that the ports were the only border point that remained operational during the lockdown period. The national port sector has

very quickly set up operational processes adapted to the new context that requires health security measures to deal with the spread of COVID-19. As such, the digitization and dematerialization of port processes have been, as part of the management of this crisis, a crucial tool that has allowed the national port sector to succeed in the challenge of service continuity. The context of the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the relevance of the strategic choices of the ANP aimed at the dematerialization of port processes through the implementation in 2008, in concert with all the actors of the port ecosystem, of PortNet.

**In May, the government announced the New Development Model, which aims to modernize all sectors of the economy. What are your thoughts on the objectives, and what will be the possible impact on your work?**

The New Development Model of Morocco, as you mentioned, defines a new vision for the country, which aims to trigger an acceleration of the economic dynamic and to consolidate the kingdom's society project. As part of its strategic plan for the 2022-2024 period, the ANP plans to contribute to the declination of the orientations set out in the NMD, including logistics competitiveness, the consolidation of the sectoral regulatory mission, and the strengthening of digitization through the "Smart Ports" program. The implementation of these various projects will contribute to further strengthening the competitiveness of national ports.

**What are your ambitions and expectations for the next six months?**

The global context remains impacted by the effects of the health crisis, with an imbalance in world trade exchanges, which has led to new challenges linked to the surge in freight rates and the scarcity of containers. In Morocco, as I have already mentioned, the health crisis did not impact the overall trade volumes of the ports managed by the ANP, which continued to follow a positive trend. For 2022, we expect a moderate growth of 2.4% in national port traffic, with an overall volume of 92.8 million tons. In terms of objectives, the main priorities set by the ANP in the short and medium term are (i) the finalization of current projects, (ii) the strengthening of operational regulation by reengineering processes, and (iii) the acceleration of the digitalization and dematerialization of port processes. ✖



# A WINNING FORMULA

Youssef Ahouzi  
DIRECTOR GENERAL & ACTING CEO,  
PORTNET S.A

**PortNet is one of the most significant developments to ever happen in Moroccan logistics and is key to improving productivity and competitiveness at Moroccan ports and beyond.**

## BIO

Youssef Ahouzi joined PORTNET.SA in 2015 as CIO. On top of his duties at PORTNET.SA, he is vice-president of the African Alliance for Electronic Commerce. He is a graduate of the Mohammedia School of Engineers and a qualified state engineer. He also has an MBA from Ecole des Ponts Business School.

**PortNet has become an essential strategic tool for many players in the logistics and port industry. What has its journey been like?**

The PortNet story began in the 2000s, when the government started a big reform of the port sector in order to improve the productivity and competitiveness of the Moroccan ports. At the same level, Morocco has started a parallel reform to strengthen its legal procedures to improve the business environment of foreign trade, so a global study on all documents exchanged in international trade was conducted to map all import and export processes of all modes of land, sea, and air transport. The problem of congestion in the Port of Casablanca in 2007 also accelerated the implementation of a system to facilitate and automate operations. It was then that the National Ports Agency introduced and implemented the PortNet project. Several modules were developed, starting with the vessel arrival, the berth request, and the manifest. In 2014, PortNet became the national single window for foreign trade procedures by integrating banks, government agencies, and all stakeholders involved in the various processes of international trade.

**How does a single window operating system facilitate collaboration between parties and shape a successful ecosystem?**

Morocco's experience is fairly unique compared to other countries, as a single port authority manages almost all Moroccan ports, allowing PortNet to be the central management platform for all ports. This platform integrates the entire supply chain from the airport to customs, including banks and the Ministry of Commerce. It is therefore a win-win platform that serves the entire community and places the interests of importers and exporters at the center of all projects to improve the international trade climate and make Moroccan operators increasingly competitive.

**Today, there are several challenges related to the pandemic, especially in terms of supply chains and shipping costs. How do you view the situation?** We were able to deal with the situation proactively since the essence of the national single window is dematerialization and the reduction of travel and human contact during the completion of import/export formalities. When the pandemic hit, the community was already prepared with PortNet, since all essential processes were dematerialized and fully operational.

**What are the new priorities in digitalization?**

Despite the integration of many processes in the national single window, there is still much to do if we want to integrate the entire supply chain. We also need to constantly encourage the community to innovate and present new services to our customers. PortNet's vision is to offer each business operator even more services and optimize operations and find solutions to the different problems of the community.

**How do you align PORTNET.SA's strategy with that of the New Development Model (NDM) announced by the government in May?**

NDM only accentuated the importance of digital component of the economy. PortNet is one of the pioneers in digitalization and logistics. Its success demonstrates that where objectives and stakeholders are considered, a collaboration is possible through a digitalization platform. Ecosystems should be created in other sectors such as banking, industry, and so on, which will in turn facilitate the digitalization of flows and the entire B2B universe, because this is where the most can be achieved to improve the performance and productivity of Moroccan companies.

**What are your ambitions for the next six to 12 months?**

The priority is to implement a new innovation strategy focused on two aspects. The first is to orchestrate a community that is already open to digitalization and innovation and that takes into account several stakeholders such as start-ups, SMEs, universities, schools, and many other actors in the logistics sector. The second aspect focuses on everything that supports the strategy by providing the necessary services and data to the community. We also continue to work with the community for the digitalization of all processes for the continuous improvement of the national single window. ✕



# PORTNET

الشبكة الوطنية لتبسيط مساهمات التجارة الخارجية  
GUICHET UNIQUE NATIONAL DES PROCÉDURES DU COMMERCE EXTÉRIEUR

***Your competitiveness inspires us***  
***Votre compétitivité nous inspire***



# THE RIGHT STEPS

Saïd Maghraoui Hassani  
DIRECTOR OF DEFENSE AND  
TRADE REGULATIONS,  
MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY AND TRADE

**Digitalization measures, the PortNet platform included, helped Morocco to navigate the impact of the pandemic efficiently.**

## BIO

Saïd Maghraoui Hassani is an economist. Since 2013, he has been responsible for the conduct of foreign trade policy within the Ministry of Industry and Trade. In this capacity, he has contributed to several initiatives aimed at the dematerialization of import and export procedures through their integration into the PortNet platform.

**As a Director of Defense and Trade Regulations, what initial measures did you take to deal with the pandemic?**

As soon as the pandemic was declared, Morocco took the urgent necessary measures, dealt with the lockdown situation, and suspended several activities. My main concern was the provision of necessary products such as medicine and food. Therefore, the ministry was focused on maintaining stable prices and ensuring sufficient supply in the market. For that, we put a taskforce in place that was in contact with different sectors that produce and import products that were identified as commodities. It was absolutely necessary to gather regular information and have daily updates about prices and supply lines. We used an electronic platform to receive all of this information. We were also connected through PortNet to follow up on our export commitments. This platform enabled us to frequently review our day-to-day work in terms of completed imports and those in progress. This was our main role during the pandemic, as well as satisfying consumers and the market with regular provisioning of local and imported items.

**What were the main lessons learned for your department as a result of the pandemic?**

Moroccan companies are highly resilient and adaptive. Of course, there were disturbances in the early days, though things subsequently improved, and everyone adapted. Second, there were lessons learned from the collective work between the administration and private companies, and we were able to achieve great results. PortNet was easy to access and enabled everyone to input data and access the information to make decisions. This was extremely important to the extent that it enabled higher productivity. These were the main lessons from the pandemic.

**How does the ministry plan to continue to support trade moving forward, particularly with greater levels of digitalization?**

Digitalization was also linked to the pandemic and was extremely useful during this period. It played an important role for following up with contacts and business deals in Morocco and the rest of the world. Digitalization also enabled us to facilitate many activities, especially those related to the procedures for foreign trade. The PortNet platform facilitated the management of all these procedures, allowing several collaborators to handle the formalities related to imports and exports and facilitated the management of price reductions, improved traceability, provided transparency, and reduced the risk of errors. All these elements contributed to an easier switch toward a digitalized system of working. These are tools that allow us to manage our procedures and help collaborators and our administration have a better overall view. Furthermore, it provides for a clearer perspective in relation to a certain amount of data and constitutes an important databank that allow us to better direct our policies.

**What are the priorities for the ministry for the next three years?**

One of our major objectives is to continue our facilitation program through paperless international trade procedures. Our ambition is to go completely paperless in terms of the formalities of foreign trade in a few years for all stakeholders, including the controllers, customs, companies, and so on. Next, we witnessed a huge reconstruction of global value chains. Previously, we had global value chains, though with the pandemic, we are moving increasingly toward regionalized value chains. This means that part of our sourcing from Europe and also China will come from neighboring countries. Morocco will also be better placed in this new configuration of value chains. We will also focus on the development and promotion of our exports in a more efficient way. One of our priorities will be to boost our exports and better integrate the global value chains and international trade. Morocco is already well placed in the region, Europe, and Africa, though we can do much more. This is a major priority for both the ministry and the country. This will enable us to reduce the deficit and create job opportunities, particularly in the export sectors. ✖

# A WINDOW ON TOMORROW

The challenges of sustaining and optimizing the flow of international trade are manifold, and certain requirements are common to each stage of the logistics process.

**ONE NOTEWORTHY** consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic was the knock-on economic effect of microchip shortages. It underlined the wider risk to industry of the weaker links in the global supply chain. Yet, the year-round challenges faced by the logistics industry reach far beyond biology. In fact, ongoing advances in digitalized processes and data generation in the logistics ecosystem are symptomatic of a wider pan-sector trend.

## THE CHALLENGES

PwC studies reveal that as the world edges toward the efficiencies of Industry 4.0, its adoption is by no means universal, with consequences for laggard firms' competitiveness across the supply chain. Given the interconnectedness that defines global commerce, it is telling that just 10% of transport and logistics companies view their data-related operations as mature. The world at large runs on actionable data. And logistics, the lifeblood of industry and economy, benefits hugely from streamlined processes, and compliance with international standards, achievable with data-driven and real time information in the digital environment. Until relatively recently, the shipping ecosystem had been fraught with lengthy manual procedures, permit seeking, and cargo processing. What's more, links in the chain were not efficiently communicating standardized workable data on shipping and settlement, extending delivery times. At stake, therefore, were firms' control over their shipping activities on the brutally competitive global stage.

So what's the solution? In Morocco's case, the answer is the National Single Window for Foreign Trade Procedures (PortNet), today itself a catalyst of digital adoption. Its job is to establish lasting connections between the components of the port ecosystem, such as logistics firms, and foster innovation through smart solutions and training of member companies. It seems we could not anticipate the pandemic. Yet ultimately anticipation allows strategic planning.

## QUITE A VIEW

PORTNET.SA's game-changing pilot project—the prototype of its Single Window, came out in 2011 to digitalize ship call documents at the Port of Casablanca. This national initiative also exemplifies the win-win of public-private partnerships (PPP). PortNet currently offers 120 digital community solutions, covering all sea, air and land cross-border trade points, to over 59,000 users in both public and private sectors; an ecosystem that features over 20 banks, 200 shipping agents, three handling operators, 300 freight forwarder, 43 administrations, 62 MEAD operators and 45,000 importers and exporters. Since its inception in 2012, then, PortNet has helped reduce import stay delay from 11 to 6.78 days and been the engine of Morocco's National Single Window streamlining and standardizing all port and trade procedures to maximize national competitiveness. The initiative embodies the

competitive advantages of dematerialization across the logistics chain. The single window built around standardized information and documentation at a single point of entry simplifies and automates all stages of import, export and transit. Information overload is as detrimental to workflows as data deficiency. And so PORTNET.SA's single platform keeps data sharing to the bare minimum required for the transactions at hand. Training provided also addresses clients' requirements relative to their place in the logistics ecosystem. And meanwhile, PortNet's use of enterprise resource planning (ERP)—business process management software—responds to the challenge of departmental interconnectedness, digitally integrating a client's finance, supply chain, operations, commerce, reporting, manufacturing, and human resources processes. PORTNET.SA works closely with The Moroccan Exporters Association (ASMEX) on the Trade Sense community platform. Ultimately, such activities yield optimal solutions to transversal problems, raising international competitiveness.

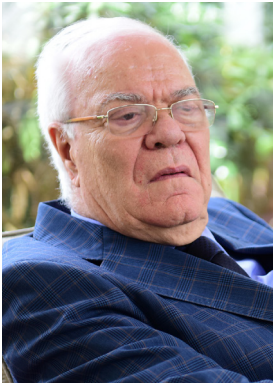
## SELECT INFORMATIONAL LANDMARKS

Reflecting the new normal of the pandemic, in 2019 PORTNET.SA launched an online subscription to its services, featuring electronic appointment booking for the exit of containers. A year later PORTNET.SA launched its PortNet bot virtual assistant, operational around the clock. And then in 2021 the organization gave the foreign trade community from freight forwarders and handling operators to testing facilities, shipping companies, and public administrations access to multi-channel payment. Notable, too, is PortNet's KPI business intelligence platform, which enables the creation of dashboards for 360-degree monitoring of actionable data on foreign trade activity, enhancing the decision-making process. In September 2021, and in a first for Morocco, PORTNET.SA held a pioneering Digital Meeting in cooperation with the National Ports Agency (ANP) and the Digital Development Agency (ADD). It addressed the challenge of innovating for competitiveness and national development. On the fringes PORTNET.SA signed a cooperation agreement with ADD on accelerating digital transformation and promoting the competitiveness of Morocco's trade ecosystem.

## FROM REGIONAL CHALLENGES TO OPPORTUNITIES

In 2021, PORTNET.SA inked a framework partnership agreement in Tangier with The Tangier-Tétouan-Al Hoceima Regional Investment Center (CRI) to boost regional logistic competitiveness. The initiative, emphasizing community intelligence across regional ecosystems, reflected Morocco's New Development Model. In conclusion, the competitiveness of the logistics sector is clear from the following numbers. Despite being an up-and-coming regional force, the World Bank Logistics Performance Index 2018 places Morocco 109th out of 160 countries. PORTNET.SA's mission is to deliver an upward thrust. ✖





## TEN STEPS AHEAD

Hassan Sentissi  
PRESIDENT,  
ASMEX

**To further promote Moroccan logistics companies, ASMEX has developed a commission that is fully dedicated to resolving both strategic and operational issues in the sector in order to spur further growth, especially amongst exporters.**

### BIO

Hassan Sentissi is the chairman of several companies including Radi Kolding, Copelit, Novadeira Maroc, Pescaibu, SMP Tarpon, Pescarif, SAP Nassim, SAP Jawhara, Badr El Bahr, Damsa, and Tissir Port. He is President of FENIP, ASMEX, ANAFAP, and AFIEF, a member of the board of IFFO, and President of the Russian-Morocco Business Council.

### How do you see the role of ASMEX in promoting logistics companies?

The competitiveness of exports depends on several factors. Beyond the product, other issues are crucial such as promotion and logistics. This is especially pertinent in the current context, as characterized by the COVID-19 pandemic and its multiple impacts. Indeed, these have put a strain on logistics flows at the global level. In this regard, ASMEX has a logistics commission that is dedicated to both strategic and operational issues in the sector. Its main mission is to contribute, with Moroccan exporters, to maintaining an agile logistics performance and to also contribute, sustainably, to increasing of our exports well beyond the third of the globe that we currently cover. The pandemic, of course, had a strong impact on Morocco and, at the same time, accelerated digital transformation.

### What were the main challenges ASMEX faced during the pandemic and how did you exercise your resilience?

ASMEX had invested in digitizing its services before the current pandemic crisis. We were conscious of the impact digital would have in terms of cost rationalization and the overcoming of geographic and time constraints. Certainly, the restrictions inherent in COVID-19 have accelerated the digitalization of several areas

and encouraged companies to be resilient in order to maintain their activities. Thus, all our programs have been maintained by using digital technology, whether in terms of promotion, organizing export conferences to new destinations, B2B, and support and training to further involve companies in the process of internationalization. World-class experts hosted several webinars that benefited more than 12,000 companies exporting or interested in internationalization and investment.

### What do you think is the potential of this digital acceleration in Morocco and on exports?

This acceleration has mainly benefited companies that have gained greater agility and higher performance in terms of their competitiveness. This gain is considerable. It has enabled many Moroccan exporting sectors to preserve their achievements, seek prospects in other markets in a logic of local sourcing requirement, and relocation as imposed by the supply delays of the importing markets.

### Going forward, what are ASMEX's goals and priorities for the next six to 12 months?

ASMEX aims to be a permanent and agile think tank at the service of Moroccan exporters. Such a provision encourages us to be in constant interaction with the entire export ecosystem in order to be a true generator of values. Our objectives are homogeneous and are intended to be efficient. They come within the framework of a five-year roadmap where the regional dynamic, in terms of exports, coexists with the implementation of an export observatory, the deployment of an investment and export strategy. The new African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) extends well beyond the West African region alone and the objectives of industrial decarbonization and other projects all converge on the unwavering support for the diversification and boosting of our exports. ✖



# PUSHING FOR CHANGE

Hicham Mellakh  
PRESIDENT, LOGISTICS  
COMPETITIVENESS COMMISSION,  
CGEM

**Given the importance of Morocco's logistics sector to its growth, CGEM continues to play an important role in advocating for the sector and pushing for initiatives to strengthen it further.**

## BIO

Mellakh Mohamed Hicham is an engineer from Arts et Métiers ParisTech. He is Managing Partner of the Transmel group and the Chairman of CGEM. He is also a member of the executive board of the Transport Federation (FT CGEM).

**In the context of Morocco's current economic recovery, what are CGEM's strategies to assist in that process and, specifically, support private enterprises in the logistics sector?**

Throughout the pandemic, CGEM has assisted a large number of companies across sectors, thanks to a proactive sectoral recovery strategy and the organization of decision-centric committees with the participation of the government to address pressing issues faced by sectors. CGEM sought to assist SMEs and negotiated on their behalf for financial pressure relief as deadlines for their contributions were extended. Companies in the logistics sector were also supported by CGEM through requests addressed to the Ministry of Transport and Logistics, among which an authorization for free access to the highway, as there were no active services due to the pandemic-related restrictions. CGEM also recommended the digitalization of as many procedures as possible during COVID-19, amongst which the green card for the logistics players to enable for a more efficient license registration process at a time when administrative services were challenged.

**PortNet plays a key role in the digitalization of logistical services. How do you work with the organization in this regard?**

I would like to highlight the strength of PortNet. Created in 2012, it has successfully managed to embark a strategic set of public and private stakeholders in Morocco to achieve a mutually beneficial aim: streamline Morocco's foreign trade procedures and improve our business climate. CGEM has been an active partner for PortNet since the early days. More recently, CGEM has initiated a discussion with the entire port community around the idea of setting up an appointment system for trucks. We are also developing a transport management system (TMS) software in collaboration with PORTNET.S.A to serve all small carriers and

SMEs. TMS will significantly facilitate the management of transport flows, schedules, loading, unloading, and so on. We are currently in discussions with PORTNET.S.A for a launch soon.

**Which direction would you like the government and the New Model for Development (NMD) to take in order to help the sector and SMEs in the logistics sector?**

CGEM has been an active contributor in the design of the New Model of Development, led by the dedicated Commission (CSMD). We are therefore naturally aligned with the recommendations contained in the report that was published in May 2021. In the wake of the NMD report, we have launched a general reflection within CGEM's board members to suggest recommendations on concrete ways to implement the NMD—our perspective was published no later than October 2021. An article dedicated to logistics was part of our thinking. In the article, we share our belief that the logistics sector suffers from a lack of competitiveness due to the scale and fragmentation, as small companies are unable to expand and end up attracting lower demand compared to their European counterparts. While Germany's logistics costs amount to 7% of GDP, Morocco stands at 20%. There is also a strong regional concentration of flows in the Casablanca-Rabat axis creating an unbalance in the demand, which remains relatively basic, with low-cost goods making up for most of the volumes, such as fruits and vegetables. The above diagnostic led us to recommend a series of concrete actions for the short and mid-term: enabling the consolidation of the logistics sector for a stronger power of scale of operators; developing a stronger structuring, optimization, and massification of flows around cities, logistics centers, and dedicated warehouses to decongest cities and integrate into the highways; conducting a series of amendments to the taxation rules for the logistics sector; advocating for the implementation of a transport contract as a piece of legislation that should be written out and specified with requirement related to capital payments and considered mandatory and legal binding between carriers; enabling the private sector to be part of the professional training for an enhanced coherence between offer and demand; and strengthening the governance between the public and private sectors. ✕



**Abdelaziz Mantrach**  
PRESIDENT,  
PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
MARITIME AGENTS, CONSIGNEES,  
AND SHIP BROKERS CHARTERING OF  
MOROCCO (APRAM)

**BIO**

Abdelaziz Mantrach has decades of experience as director and general manager of Transport Marocains, and is also President of APRAM.

**How is APRAM situated in Morocco's logistics sector, and what was APRAM's experience of the pandemic?**

APRAM acts on behalf of its members from the port of Nador in the north to Dakhla in the south, in the Moroccan Sahara. During the pandemic, we played a crucial role by being on the frontline and keeping the port logistics machine running despite the lockdowns. In 2020, it was necessary for ships to continue transporting basic necessities and medications, which meant ensuring the continuity of services and the proper port functioning without any interruptions. Morocco performed extremely well in 2020-2021. Another challenge was protecting our staff who had to board vessels to collect documentation and make things happen despite COVID-19. That is why we de-

cided to go completely paperless, not only between boats and the staff, but also between all the relevant harbor authorities.

**PORTNET.S.A seeks to build strategic alliances in the logistics industry between public and private actors. How does APRAM collaborate with PORTNET.S.A?**

We have a close relationship with PORTNET.S.A and meet almost every week to discuss and develop the facilitation of port procedures for Moroccan trade. We have come a long way; today, procedure periods have fallen from 21 days to almost seven, thanks to the collaboration between all port partners, especially PORTNET.S.A. This unique platform brought partners closer and created a port community. ✖



**Rachid Tahri**  
PRESIDENT,  
ASSOCIATION OF FREIGHT  
FORWARDING OF MOROCCO (AFFM)

**BIO**

Rachid Tahri was awarded the Wissam of national merit of exceptional class by his Majesty King Mohammed VI. He was also recognized as the Logistics Personality of the Year in 2016 in Morocco and was a European Logistics Awards Finalist in 2017. Tahri is CEO of STC MAROC and is also vice-president of the Federation of Transport and Logistics of CGEM (FT-CGEM). He is also president of the Moroccan Freight Forwarders Association (AFFM), the Moroccan Observatory for Logistics Competitiveness (OMCL), and the Interprofessional Group of Assistance to Transport and Logistics Consulting (GIAC TRANSLOG), as well as deputy president of the Association of International Road Transport (AMTRI), among other important positions.

**How do you work with PORTNET.S.A, and what was the impact of digitalization for you?**

We were always on the path to digitalization, but COVID-19 accelerated the process. We all implemented digitalization at various levels: some were able to fully integrate PortNet, while others could just integrate a part of the module. During the pandemic, integrating PortNet became vital, helping us work without having to worry about needless traveling or paperwork. We are now more than 70% digitalized thanks to the PortNet platform and the integration of several applications. Customs, the Ministry of Commerce, and the Ministry of Health have mostly made the switch to digital. Literally, we are seeing fewer clients today. We have been able to tackle not only the COVID-19 issues, but also the speed issues, thanks to digitalization. Without digitalization, the Port of Casablanca would have faced major blockages due to supply issues.

**What are your priorities for the next six to 12 months?**

The association's goal is to achieve complete digitalization. Moreover, the Moroccan Agency for the Development of Logistics Activities (AMDL) financed a part of our higher logistics and digitalization. This product is 70% insured. It offers multiple products: supply chain digitalization, training, and operational performance. The product is progressing with this support and the motivation of COVID-19. In terms of digitalization, we have made great progress. We must, however, achieve global levels of digitalization. Online payments should be completely digitalized, and we should aspire for zero paper transactions. With our partners, we could achieve global digitalization; this is what we are aiming for. ✖









**Rachid Kamal**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - GROUP**  
**SERVICES AND PROCESSING**  
**ATTIJARIWAFABANK**

**BIO**

Rachid Kamal is Executive Director in charge of Group Services and Processing at Attijariwafa bank. He started his career in 1999 within the BNP Paribas group in France and Morocco before joining the Attijariwafa bank group in 2006, where he held several positions of responsibility in electronic banking, strategic marketing, and the processing of international transactions to finally take charge of the back offices of the bank in 2020. He is also an executive director in several market establishments including PortNet. He holds a master's in banking and insurance from the University of Clermont Ferrand.

**What were the main challenges for your operations in terms of supporting and accompanying logistics companies?**

The global health crisis challenged multiple treatment processes across all industries. For Attijariwafa Bank, there were two major challenges that involved ensuring adequate support for all customers, including logistics companies. We deployed our business continuity plans across all of our business lines in order to ensure the quality of our services and the necessary support for customers while protecting the health of Attijariwafa Bank employees. In addition, our company included in its 2016-2020 strategic plan a vast digitalization program of its processes that proved to be indispensable during the pandemic, notably through the opening of self-care channels and the establishment of portals dedicated to corporate and individual customers in order to initiate the majority of their operations. This enabled full digital management without the need for papers or going to a branch.

**Three years ago, PORTNET.S.A joined forces with Attijariwafa bank to create a paperless solution for managing documentary credits. What is the progress of this collaboration and project?**

The alliance between PORTNET.S.A and Attijariwafa Bank involves the implementation of a unified platform, multi-banks, and multi-users and is also open to companies operating in import/export. It enables both banks and PortNet users to better manage their transactions while taking full advantage of the dematerialization of the entire process cycle of international operations, including documentary credits, standby letters of credit, documentary remittances, guarantees, financing requests, and commercial and financial transfers. We have defined exchange methods between the bank systems and the new Trade Direct platform, laid out the pilot area (typology of operations to be prioritized before generalization to the entire product catalog) and set out the deployment strategy in terms of the production of the new platform. ✕

**Noureddine Lahmamssi**  
**PRESIDENT,**  
**ASSOCIATION OF AUTHORIZED**  
**CUSTOMS BROKERS IN MOROCCO**  
**(ATADM)**

**BIO**

Noureddine Lahmamssi is the President of ATADM. He is a former elected member of the Casablanca region for two terms, a former elected member of the prefectural council of the Wilaya of Casablanca, and to date an elected member of the Chamber of Commerce of the Casablanca Settat region.

**What were the main challenges for ATADM over the last 18 months with the global slowdown in trade?**

Our association assisted all its members to ensure their employees could process files while working remotely. ATADM also sent a letter to the Director General of Customs laying out certain requests. The main request was to maintain customs brokers' access to the Automated Base for Network Customs (BADR) system. Our second request was to postpone credit debt for our customers, which allowed the operators to clear the goods within the limit of their credit. Most customs brokers have a collection credit at the customs level, and this collection credit is equivalent to an amount that is guaranteed by the bank. We also asked operators to be exempted from paying the fines for the failure to regularize provisional declarations within the regulatory deadlines. Another request was for an extension of the deadline for the declarations made under the economic regime customs suspensive procedure and the ATADM ATA carnet, which expires during this period. The Director General of Customs took each of these into account, and

this helped to alleviate the effects of the crisis.

**What have been the main advances in the digital innovations with regards to ATADM?**

One important impact has been the dematerialization of processes, which has allowed us to avoid customs clearance stoppages due to the connection of all customs brokers remotely and allowed them to clear goods. The impact of the single window in Morocco has allowed ATADM members to ride out the pandemic without any blockage or notable stoppages. PortNet has provided several solutions for the 100% digital foreign trade community, which is a real competitive advantage for our users. All stages of the import and export process are supported end-to-end for the entire supply chain at the transit level, such as the exchange of certificates concerning the assistance of other services such as the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the import title, the voucher to be issued, the electronic and multi-channel payment, and the application for customs exemption. ✕

# THE SMART MOVE

The rise of Morocco's logistics sector is best viewed through a single window.

**THE LOGISTICS** behind international commerce are a complex choreography of interconnected elements in real time. Numerous factors ranging from geography itself, to currency movements, payments and settlements complexity, a lack of standardized international transparency, with a minefield of local regulations, tariffs and other barriers determined by foreign policy ensue with each shipment. Not to mention wildcards like the pandemic. Meanwhile, another key obstacle to efficient logistics that Morocco is successfully reversing is the digitalization gap.

## LOGISTICS AT A GLANCE

Morocco's transport and logistics sector accounts for roughly 4% of GDP, employing close to 5% of the total workforce. At the end of 2021, the traffic passing through the ports managed by the the National Ports Agency (ANP) reached an overall volume of 91 million tons, marking an increase of 3.5% compared to the previous year. In 2021, the ports of the Casablanca-Settat region represented more than 75% of overall traffic of the ports managed by ANP, with a concentration of trade around the ports of Casablanca-Jorf Lasfar, which ensured the transit of 64 million tons or 70.5% of volumes.

And while its logistics star is on the ascendancy, challenges remain. For example, the main national mode, road transportation—65,000 operators, half of which operate informally—suffers severe inefficiencies. Of the total volume of freight transported domestically, 75% is phosphate, mostly shifted by rail, second in the transport mode ranking. Then come maritime (cabotage) and air. It is telling, too, that in the absence of adequate cold chain infrastructure, roughly 55% of fruits and vegetables, 20% of meats, 30% of fish and seafood, and 20% of dairy are wasted in transit each year. Such inefficiencies are mercifully not apparent in the broad sway of Morocco's international trade.

## GLOBAL POSITIONING

According to the WB's Logistics Performance Index 2018, Morocco ranked 109th out of 160 countries. Morocco proved relatively weak in custom services; that is, the clearance process, in infrastructure, operational efficiency of transport operators and customs brokers, and track and tracing of consignments. The study recognized Morocco's competitively priced and timely shipments.

The National Logistics Strategy aims to minimize the weight of logistics costs in GDP from the current 20% to 15% over the medium term. This five percentage-point decline would confirm a more competitive sector and galvanize national growth. From an ecological perspective, too, a mid-term 35% reduction in CO2 from road transportation is also anticipated.

## ...REGISTERING A NET IMPROVEMENT

World Bank research also reveals that 98% of Morocco's international trade passes through its ports, which explains the investment being made to enhance inter-connectivity through port expansion and

investment in road and rail infrastructure. 35 seaports, 11 accommodating international trade, support the country's emergence as an international hub for commerce with West Africa. Infrastructure is only half of the equation though. And the procedural travails that beset the international to-and-fro of cargoes are addressed by Morocco's single-window platform; a one-stop-shop to rationalize all processes across the ecosystem. Enter PORTNET.S.A, established in 2012 to spearhead Morocco's growing presence in international trade, and sector digitalization, this in step with existing initiatives such as Morocco's e-gov services. The organization, collaborating with the Moroccan Exporters Association, fosters lasting connections across the transport ecosystem. It also promotes efficiency-oriented innovation offering its 55,000 clients smart solutions and training at a single address. Additionally, PORTNET.S.A has an open innovation platform to support the logistics ecosystem.

A fuller description of PORTNET.S.A's services is far beyond the scope of this article. Suffice to say they range from supply chain automation and process dematerialization, and regional and international interoperability, which itself promotes predictability, to the promotion of an electronic payment culture; harmonized payment systems and the fuller integration of trade flows. All of this spells operational traceability, expediting the cross-border movement of goods. The numbers to date are impressive. PortNet accounts for over 80% of Morocco's dematerialized import-export chain. Its 120 online services rendered digitally comprehensively encapsulate the components of getting goods from A to B from payments to claims.

PortNet's digital environment allows clients to create their own dashboards for process monitoring. The actionable 360° information this yields in real time allows effective decision-making. Actionable data is perhaps best exemplified by the ability to see supply and demand and act accordingly. To prevent Moroccan operators from returning empty to point of origin, PortNet has rolled out an online logistics exchange to aid shipment fluidity.

The wider African continent represents the golden ticket for Morocco, and, being a member of the African Alliance for Electronic Commerce, which partners the African Development Bank (AfDB) PORTNET.S.A provides increased interoperability of African international trade

With bureaucracy the bane of international business, PORTNET.S.A's online service connects operators for registration and documentation exchange with public administrations through a single window. The platform provides a dedicated, instant, and secure multi-channel payment solution. And the settlement headache is also assuaged by PORTNET.S.A's pioneering TradeDirect multi-bank single window for banking operations and international financial flows, consolidating all transactions of multi-banked clients.

Logistics, then, continues to grow in significance for Morocco's economy, and the overarching support of PORTNET.S.A stands to make this a sustainable proposition. ✖

# SMART MOVES

MOROCCO'S TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS SECTOR IS EXPANDING ACROSS LAND, SEA, AND AIR, ENSURING THE SMOOTH MOVEMENT OF GOODS AND PEOPLE.

Accounts for

**4%**  
of GDP

National Logistics Strategy aims to minimize weight of logistics costs in GDP from 20 to

**12%**

Employs

**5%**  
of the workforce, or  
**1M**  
people

Ranked

**109<sup>th</sup>**  
of 160 countries in WB's  
Logistics Performance  
Index 2018



## LAND

- **1,334km** long network of toll-free expressways, over 700km under construction
- Largest ongoing project is Tiznit-Laayoune toll-free expressway, a 550-km road to link Tiznit to Laayoune in the south.
- **35% reduction** in CO2 from road transportation targeted as part of National Logistics Strategy
- 2,295-km rail network
- Rail carries approx. 4,000 million tkm of goods per year



## SEA

- **35 sea ports**, 11 accommodating international trade
- **98% of international trade** passes through ports
- PortNet accounts for over **80% of Morocco's dematerialized import-export chain**
- Port of Casablanca is country's largest, accounting for **64 MT of goods in 2021**



## AIR

- Air transport sector supports **34,000 jobs directly**, a further 74,000 indirectly
- Air transport industry worth **USD1.3 billion**
- Normal passenger levels expected to **return by 2024**
- Increase of 60% in passengers expected in 2022
- **25 million passengers** passed through Moroccan airports in 2019



**Isidore Biyiha**  
**PRESIDENT,**  
**AFRICAN ALLIANCE FOR ELECTRONIC**  
**COMMERCE (AAEC)**

**BIO**

Isidore Biyiha has 25 years of experience in trade facilitation. Prior occupying his current position, he was consecutively COO and executive vice president of UNITRANS-CAMEROON. He has a master's in transport and logistics from Paris IX Dauphine University.

**What are the goals of AAEC, and how do they relate to your work in Morocco?**

AAEC is an African organization that comprises over 20 African countries whose common goal is to set up single window trading platform. However, we are also interested in the issue of cross-border trade, namely the facilitation of cross-border business operations. AAEC has existed since 2008, and before COVID-19 struck, we would meet regularly to share our experiences and the evolution of the single window in each of our member countries. Our mission is the promotion of the single window, which the World Trade Organization strongly recommends, especially for African countries, because it can facilitate cross-border trade. We established an orientation that is supported by several international organizations, such as the World Bank, the African Bank, WCO, and WTO, among others. We try where possible to come together to reflect on the concept and promote the model in Africa.

**What is your view of the progress achieved in terms of the digitalization**

**of payments and the development of e-commerce opportunities in Morocco?**

Morocco is a founding member of AAEC. Today, PortNet is a point of reference in Morocco and the wider world. PortNet is an active and committed member that contributes to the improvement of the alliance's concepts. Morocco participated in the creation of a single window implementation guide for countries wishing to apply it. It has also participated in every relevant international conference, and in 2016 it organized one on the single window that was a resounding success. Morocco is involved in several international organizations such as WCO and WTO, among others, where it reports on our progress. Morocco is one of the major players in AAEC and among the most important members contributing to its progress. I want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to PORTNET.S.A for being the flagbearer of the alliance, both in Morocco and internationally. If the alliance is known today, it is thanks to the members who work hard to set up and operate the single window. ✖



**Hans Rook**  
**CHAIRMAN**  
**INTERNATIONAL PORT COMMUNITY**  
**SYSTEMS ASSOCIATION (IPCSA)**

**BIO**

Hans Rook has worked in the transport and logistics sea trade sector for 47 years. He started his career at a shipping agency and, having gained experience in all facets of import and export services, was appointed to set up the ICT function within the company. Having been general manager for ICT within the shipping agency, he was asked to join the Rotterdam group of experts for the set-up of the Port Community.

**What is the motivation behind promoting port community systems (PCS)?**

IPCSA promotes PCS and single-window setups for trade facilitation as these are great tools to use for facilitating the logistics information flow in and out of the port. It also reduces costs at the port. Many ports have only just started to introduce PCS. Driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, many realized that passing paperwork around is risky in light of COVID-19, while PortNet has been doing it for many years. Ports in Africa and Latin America are looking for solutions to have a PCS and look for examples from the rest of the world. The governance of the PCS is key, and it works to have one environment, one single window, including business-to-business and business-to-government to exchange data. We are a global organization and with PortNet as a member we highlight the work done in the Moroccan

ports PCS and Trade Single Window solution as much as possible as a good example. We have a strong family bond and seek to promote a family culture throughout our association members and in the ports we work with, exchanging views, holding member meetings, supporting each other, and promoting ports on our website and social media.

**What is your assessment of the digital developments in Morocco's ports, and what are the priorities regarding digitalization moving forward?**

The most important goal is to harmonize standards. We have thousands of customers, and the digitalization of Moroccan's ports is world class. You cannot do machine-to-machine communication without standards, which is why standards are so key. ✖



