

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am glad to be here with you today, and I thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Memories for the Future Foundation (*Fondation Mémoires pour l'Avenir*).

We have imagined “Re-inventing Toumliline” by rehabilitating the location in order to turn it into an international centre dedicated to dialogue between cultures and religions. The idea is not to rehabilitate a monastery, but rather - without erasing this episode of the Christian presence in Morocco - to create a place of remembrance testifying about the shared history between Islam, Judaism and Christianity, between Christians, Jews and Muslims (bridges do exist !).

What about this monastery shall we re-invent ? Encounters, dialogue, and guided by the same intellectual as well as spiritual imperative, our aim is to reinstate these encounters which gathered young people from across the world, with high-class speakers. We still nurture the same desire, one same desire: to pursue teaching these young people how to listen, to share, to learn what dialogue and brotherhood mean, without erasing differences. Because during these summer courses in Toumliline, the conversation was essentially about Man and human values, about how to meet the challenges of the day, away from dogma or ideology, in true freedom. The conversation was about major social issues, about religions, about what links them rather than what separates them.

As it stands, the Memories for the Future Foundation has started developing the present proposal for rehabilitating the location, research concerning the history of these encounters and round-tables to probe the academic and intellectual community, in order to try and determine potential obstacles and how this community might propose to reclaim such encounters relating to issues concerning youth today.

Within the next year, we hope to be able to establish whether rehabilitating the former monastery buildings is feasible and financially possible, and also what form the reinstatement of international courses might take. This all involves a great deal of utopia and idealism, but that does not keep us from being pragmatic.

After all, these pioneer monks found a way to “move mountains”, despite being allowed only limited means, and what’s more in the difficult days of the Cold War and the fights for independence.

We are going through difficult times again. We must attempt to create spaces dedicated to exchanges and debate, examining the major issues stirring today’s society. This must be done through a critical approach to mutual recognition - how to live together - questioning our imaginaries and common values, our relationships to history, to other peoples, to technology and to social or geo-political challenges, as we face a world being built.

We do not know whether we will be able to bring together two major figures mastering theology, philosophy and anthropology such as Levinas and Massignon, but thanks to a few Benedictine monks, henceforward we know that everything is possible. Toumliline has allowed us to place great hope upon mankind and our capacity to transcend history’s challenges. Inter-religious dialogue, intelligence deployed with no restriction and the quest to find the light which lifts us are more than ever essential.

| Such hope dwells in us now more than ever.

I thank you for your attention.