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Bush Signs Trade Pact with Morocco

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WASHINGTON: President George W. Bush on Tuesday signed a free trade agreement with Morocco, helping his goal of creating a US-Middle East Free Trade Area (MEFTA) by 2013, the White House said.

"This agreement will help create jobs and new opportunities for Americans by deepening our trade ties with an important friend in the Arab world," White House spokesman Scott McClellan said in a statement.

"Morocco's leadership has been steadfast in its support for economic and political liberalization and with this agreement, Morocco joins Jordan and Israel as our FTA (free trade area) partners in the region," he said.

"This agreement also advances the president's goal of a US-Middle East Free Trade Area (MEFTA) by 2013. ... The openness, prosperity, and hope that free trade will engender will help make the region and America safer." The agreement with Morocco, which the US Congress passed in July, calls for the elimination of customs tariffs on 95 percent of industrial and commercial goods.

Source : **Agence France Presse (AFP)**