U.S. Department of State
FY 2001 Country Commercial Guide: Mauritania

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

This Country Commercial Guide (CCG) presents a comprehensive look at Mauritania's commercial environment, using economic, political, and market analysis. CCGs were established by recommendation of the Trade Promotion Coordinating Committee, a multi-agency task force, to consolidate various reporting documents prepared for the US business community. CCGs are prepared annually at US embassies through the combined efforts of US Government agencies. Country Commercial Guides are available for US exporters from the National Trade Data Bank on CD-ROM or through the Internet. Please contact STAT-USA at 1-800-STAT-USA for more information. GUIDELINE Commercial Guides can be accessed via the World Wide Web at http://www.stat-usa.gov, http://www.state.gov/, and http://www.mac.doc.gov. CCGs can also be ordered in hard copy or on diskette from the National Technical Information Service (NTIS) at 1-800-553-NTIS. US exporters seeking general export information/assistance and country-specific commercial information should contact the US Department of Commerce's Trade information Center by phone at 1-800-USA-Trade or by fax at (202) 482-4473.

Mauritania, with a territory of 1,085,760 square km, population of 2.6M, and GDP/capita of $380, forms a geographical link between North and Sub-Saharan Africa. It is a growing market increasingly open to American trade and investment.

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania (GIRM) has made a high-level decision to encourage imports and increase the availability of goods throughout the country. With the support of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the GIRM has also liberalized the exchange system and reformed the banking and education sectors. Privatization and the revision of the tax system are in full swing. The national airline has been sold and a license for cellular phone provider issued. The telecommunications, electricity, and water companies will be privatized in 2000 or 2001.

Traders continue to import large quantities of consumer goods (rice, flour, sugar, wheat, long-life and powdered milk, and clothing), vehicles and spare parts, mining equipment and tractors, building equipment and materials, office equipment and supplies, cosmetics, and electronics. In 1999, the country's total imports decreased by 10% in local currency and 20% in USD. This decrease is attributed to the good rainfall registered in 1999, which reduced the importation of cereals, and to the decline of purchasing power caused by the devaluation of the ouguiya. In absolute terms, US exports to Mauritania increased by 7% in local currency but decreased 3% in USD, due to the ouguiya devaluation. The US share of total imports increased by 8% in 1999, moving it up from 4th in 1997 to 2nd among Mauritania's largest suppliers (after France). Greater equipment purchases by the national mining company (Société Nationale Industrielle et Minière or SNIM) accounted for most of the increase. Products purchased from the United States include mining equipment, heavy vehicles, machinery parts and supplies, tires, cigarettes, and cosmetics.

Mauritania's economic performance is improving. GDP grew 4.7% in 1999 in local currency, exceeding GIRM projections. Exports and imports as a percentage of GDP have reached 37% and 33% respectively. However, the country remains dependent on financial aid flows from the World Bank (IBRD), European Union (EU), United Nations (UN), and other donors. In 1999, Mauritania received funding from the International Development Agency for several development projects. The most significant include a $15M credit to undertake geological research and stimulate foreign direct investment in the mining sector, $10.8M to provide an institutional and legal framework for the telecommunications and post office reform project, and $4.9M for food security.

COMMERCIAL ENVIRONMENT

The commercial environment for US products is favorable. Mauritania maintains a climate conducive to investment. If privatization leads to improved management, as expected, the resulting inflows of capital will further spur economic growth and development. Government priorities focus on the creation of small- and medium-size industries to produce essential goods locally and thus reduce the unemployment rate (see Labor, below). Local telecommunications, agricultural, fishing, tourism, and other companies are interested in joint ventures with US firms. Many local businesspeople seek to represent or serve as agents/distributors for US companies.

MAJOR BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

Mining, fishing, agriculture, and construction all offer excellent business opportunities for US exporters. Major government projects such as the reorganization of the fishing sector; oil, gold, and diamond prospecting; drinking water supply; road construction and repair; telecommunications; electricity production; and irrigation technologies promise the greatest potential for US companies. Local traders interested in opening new markets with advanced technologies also create opportunities for American firms.

EMBASSY ASSISTANCE

Embassy Nouakchott is dedicated to offering assistance and advice to American businesspeople seeking information on trade and investment opportunities in Mauritania. The embassy's economic/commercial officer and assistant can be reached Sunday-Thursday by telephone at [222] 25-26-60/63 or [222] 25-11-41/45. Commercial queries can be faxed to [222] 25-15-92 or emailed to sowei@state.gov. Companies seeking Mauritanian business are encouraged to copy the Embassy on significant correspondence.

II. ECONOMIC TRENDS AND OUTLOOK

MAJOR TRENDS AND OUTLOOK

Mauritania possesses some of the world's richest fishing grounds as well as significant mineral resources of iron, copper, and gypsum. Phosphate deposits have also been discovered but have not yet been exploited. Prospecting is underway, with encouraging preliminary results, for oil, gold, and diamonds.

The outlook for 2000 and 2001 is continued improvement. Since 1992, the GIRM has pursued an economic reform program supported by its development partners (IBRD, IMF and Paris Club members) and consequently has restrained government spending and increased tax revenues. These reforms resulted in an increased average real GDP of 4.8% from 1997 to 1999, compared to 3.9% from 1994 to 1996. This increase caused per capita income to rise 10.5% (in local currency). In 1999 and 2000, the GIRM introduced measures aiming to improve project management and reduce waste, as required by its development partners. The IBRD and IMF have noted the improvement realized in these three years and encouraged the GIRM to pursue its economic policies with determination to reach its goal of 7% annual economic growth.

However, the Mauritanian economy remains exposed to exogenous shocks. It has a narrow export resource base, with 98% of its export revenues coming from fish and iron ore. It is heavily dependent on external assistance, accounting for 90% of investment from 1998-2001. It also has a continuing balance of trade deficit. On the bright side, debt servicing, which consumed 49% of public revenue in 1999, should no longer prove onerous now that Mauritania has been approved for substantial debt relief under the Enhance HIPC Debt Relief Initiative.

American products (especially mining equipment and cigarettes) imported directly have taken much of the market share held previously by Europeans. The GIRM continues to seek foreign (particularly American and Canadian) partners for gold and oil prospecting and involvement in the privatization programs. Projects funded by international financial institutions (IFIs) also offer opportunities for US investment in the areas of road construction, irrigation, energy production, communications, and consulting.

The following development priorities enjoy significant funding from donors and lenders:

- Infrastructure (road reinforcement and extension, communications, port renovations)
- Agriculture (conversion to arable land, irrigation, equipment, machinery, quality improvement)
- Drinking water supply
- Reforestation
- Fishing sector restructuring and maritime surveillance
- Oil and mineral resources prospecting
- Health and education development

PRINCIPAL GROWTH SECTORS

Growth index by sector figures are unavailable. However, the following sectors played a key role in the country's economic growth in 1999 and continue to do so.

MINING AND INDUSTRY

Mauritania's mineral deposits are estimated to include 180M metric tons of rich iron ore (66%) and billions of metric tons of 33% iron ore. In 1999, SNIM exports reached 45.5B ouguiya ($219M), accounting for 58% of total exports. This constituted a 14% increase over 1998, making the mining sector Mauritania's largest foreign exchange generator, in spite of a continuing decrease in the world price of iron and heavy global competition. Good management, increased worker productivity attributable to increases in salaries and benefits, and diversification of the company's activities boosted both iron ore production and exports in 1999. SNIM purchased $14.2M in equipment and spare parts in 1999 and $9M in the first quarter of 2000. The company has planned to purchase at least $25M in the year 2000. Fifty US firms have business dealings with SNIM. Mining is now considered the sector of greatest potential interest to foreign firms, particularly suppliers of mining equipment, machinery, and services.

The small-scale industrial sector is limited to small and medium-sized industries operating in fish processing, chemicals and plastics, food and beverages, metal products, building materials, furniture, gypsum, and cookie production. The industrial sector is faced with serious problems, including high energy costs, high taxes on imported raw materials, limited bank credit, and aggressive competition with similar imported goods. Mauritania is looking to develop its modern sector through the exploration of new natural resources with significant reserves, such as copper (100M metric tons), gypsum (4,000M metric tons), salt, phosphate (136M metric tons), oil, gold, and diamonds. In 1999 and 2000, the GIRM signed or renewed research contracts with several foreign firms, including BHP Minerals and Bab-Co (American), Rex Diamond Mining Corporation (Canadian), Ashton West Africa Property Ltd. (Australian) and La Source (French). These companies confirmed the presence of gold, oil, phosphates, aluminum, and copper.

FISHING

Along its 754 km Atlantic coast, Mauritania enjoys a 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) that contains some of the richest fishing grounds in the world. In 1999, the fishing sector was the country's second largest foreign exchange earner. However, the sector was plagued by problems, including Mauritania's lack of an effective GIRM fisheries policy, sectoral mismanagement, overfishing, and limited technical ability to monitor and control its EEZ. As a result, the GIRM, with the support of its partners, undertook significant measures to reform this sector. It improved its surveillance capacity to control the amount and type of fish caught and by whom and extended the no-fishing biological reproduction period from 30 to 60 days per year. In addition, the GIRM began to encourage joint ventures with technically advanced foreign firms in the fishing sector to increase value added and create employment. In July 20000 an American firm signed such a joint venture to lease boats and manage a fish-processing factory and plans to expand to another dozen factories in the near future.

The fishing sector offers a variety of opportunities for US sales and exports. American boat construction companies may be able to break into what has traditionally been a European and Japanese market. US companies may also become joint owners with Mauritanian partners in fishing ventures. Chinese participation in the Mauritanian fishery sector has fallen due to the age of its fleet and disputes over the terms of cooperation, so local companies are seeking new foreign partners to help them modernize and raise fish processing installations to international food safety standards.

The GIRM is modernizing the fisheries sector through major infrastructure development (port extension and warehouse development). The EU and African Development Bank (AFDB) are collaborating with private Mauritanians to develop Mauritania's traditional, or artisanal, fishing sub-sector. This sub-sector produces less revenue but generates more jobs than industrial fishing. Mauritania's national fisheries institute, the "Centre National des Recherches Océanographiques et des Pêches," and the "Direction de la Commande des Pêches" are intensifying their efforts to protect and control the country's maritime resources.

The GIRM views fishing as a major source of future employment and foreign currency earnings as well as a nutritional resource. Given this sector's central importance to the Mauritanian economy, the IBRD targeted it for reform under the umbrella of a new private sector development project. The 1999 and 2000 macroeconomic strategy includes measures to upgrade Mauritania's fishing fleet, reduce overfishing, and improve management.

AGRICULTURE AND LIVESTOCK

These two sectors play an important role in Mauritania's economy, generating 20.4% of GDP in 1999 and employing about 45% of the working population. However, Mauritania's cereal production continues to be insufficient to meet its population's needs. In 1999, total production

was 244,000 metric tons, which covered only 45% of the country's needs (estimated at 543,200 metric tons). With a 299,200 metric ton deficit, the food situation continues to a concern in 1999/2000, requiring additional cereal imports and donor aid. Cereal imports for 2000 are estimated at 213K metric tons, and the GIRM continues to seek food aid. The Senegal River Valley region, where the country's arable land is located, has in recent years has attracted increasing numbers of local investors. American exporters of agricultural equipment could exploit this potential. Recent GIRM measures aim to stimulate, liberalize, and rationalize agricultural production. The GIRM has asked donors to make agriculture their highest priority, so that Mauritania can move rapidly toward its long-term goal of self-sufficiency in food grains. Projects provide irrigation in conjunction with regional dam projects. Backed by foreign donors, Mauritania, Senegal, and Mali have established the Organization to Develop the Senegal River (OMVS) and are constructing dams in Diama, Senegal and Manantali, Mali for navigation, production of electrical power generation, and irrigation.

The GIRM's irrigated agriculture program, which has the pledged support of the IBRD for the next eleven years, aims to rehabilitate 11,000 hectares of cultivable land along the Senegal River Valley and to diversify the species being raised. The GIRM has adopted a long-term development strategy for the agricultural sector that aims to guarantee food security, improve farmers' incomes, protect and conserve natural resources, and increase the role of agriculture in the national economy. The land reform law is now being revised to allow farmers to take advantage of irrigation projects. The GIRM views agriculture and livestock as priority sectors for further growth and reduced dependency on imports. The Government promotes private investment in the agricultural sector to modernize the production system, improve the quality of cereals produced (mainly rice), and introduce irrigation.

GOVERNMENT ROLE IN THE ECONOMY

The GIRM has made economic growth and poverty reduction key objectives of its development strategy. These efforts have been supported by the IBRD, IMF, AFDB, and other partners. To this end, the GIRM has undertaken some significant measures, including privatization of state-owned companies (e.g., insurance, fish export marketing company, petroleum marketing company, national airlines), reform of the banking sector, liberalization of the exchange rate system, and reduction of trade and investment barriers. Currently, the GIRM's main objectives are to increase revenues, reduce expenditures, continue privatizing most remaining public companies, and strengthen the performance of enterprises that remain public.

The results have been modestly impressive. GDP growth (in local currency) rose from 3.9% in the 1994-1996 period to 4.8% in the 1997-1999 period. The state-owned companies (particularly SNIM and the ports) accounted for approximately 17% of GDP in 1999. Privatization, however, is reducing the economic dominance of state-owned companies. Mauritania has renewed its Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility agreement with the IMF and has established a good performance track record on structural adjustment that resulted in its being declared eligible for

debt relief under the Heavy Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. In March 2000, the IBRD and IMF announced the cancellation of $622M of debt under HIPC, representing 40% of the total on Mauritania's books as of fall 1998. In March 2000, the Paris Club cancelled $80M, representing 90% of Mauritania's debt servicing covering the period August 1, 1998 – September 30, 2002. The remainder has been rescheduled under favorable conditions.

The 2000 Government investment budget lists the following development priorities, which donors and lenders have funded:

- Continuation of macro-economic stabilization
- Agricultural and rural development
- Industrial sector development
- Environmental protection
- Infrastructure development
- Human resources development
- Maritime surveillance and reinforcement
- Poverty alleviation

MONETARY AND FINANCIAL SECTOR REFORM**:** The GIRM's monetary policy uses indirect controls to allow market forces to operate. Banking supervision has been strengthened to encourage the development of an inter-bank market and to ensure bank solvency. Fiscal and monetary restraints have been maintained, but the stability of the ouguiya has not been restored as planned. The continuing devaluation of the local currency poses a problem for local importers, but with the completion by the end of 2001 of the Central Bank's efforts to bring the official exchange rate up to the market rate, the ouguiya may stabilize.

The foreign exchange system has been liberalized, and foreign currencies can be obtained through commercial banks and exchange offices upon presentation of required documents: invoices for importers and an airplane ticket with a valid passport for travelers. The Central Bank fixes the exchange rate for the ouguiya through a basket of currencies of its principal trading partners. Interest rates, which are high relative to economic activity, have discouraged private investment. The liberalization of lending and deposit rates at commercial banks, however, has boosted investment.

The Central Bank of Mauritania offers incentives to encourage fish exporters to bring back their assets in foreign currency and exchange them for ouguiya in commercial banks or exchange offices. This policy has increased the availability of foreign currencies (mainly dollars and French francs) in the market. For example, local companies may now pay foreign suppliers either in cash or by direct transfer through a commercial bank, without Central Bank involvement. This new policy has facilitated foreign payments.

The GIRM's 1999-2000 program includes maintenance of price stability through sustained implementation of fiscal and monetary restraint, promotion of private credit agencies (Caisses d'Epargne et de Credits), reform of regulatory systems, encouragement of domestic and foreign investment, and poverty reduction through fuller employment and higher wages.

FOREIGN TRADE: With the abolition of the import monopoly on essential goods (rice, wheat, flour, sugar, tea, and powdered milk), the GIRM removed restrictions on importing foodstuffs. Private Mauritanians benefited from Government efforts to increase the importation of goods and their efficient distribution throughout the country. However, credit restrictions and high interest rates constitute to pose serious difficulties for most importers. In spite of the GIRM's efforts to reduce the import tax, the average rate (28%) is still high in comparison with the region. Furthermore, the taxation system is not standardized; taxes vary according to the importance attributed to the goods. For example, the tax on products considered essential varies between 9% and 18%. In the 2000 Fiscal Law, the Government introduced a new law for customs tax called "Droit Fiscal à l'Importation" (Fiscal Law on Importation) to replace the "Droit de Douane" (Customs Law) and "Droit Fiscal" (Fiscal Law). Accordingly, the average customs tax decreased from 28% to 22%. In this way, the GIRM is seeking to encourage international trade, particularly with Arab Maghreb Union countries. Meanwhile, Mauritanian businesspeople are looking for new suppliers in developed countries with advanced technologies.

BALANCE OF PAYMENTS

The 1999 balance of payments figures are not yet available. However, indices show that the 1998 trend is continuing. In 1998, the balance of payments worsened due to an 81% rise in the trade deficit. This trade balance decrease is attributable to the significant increase in imports in 1998 (up 24%) and slight increase in exports (5%). Other contributing factors were the increased debt repayments and the reduction in expatriate worker remittances. Mauritania imports almost all its needs—e.g., foodstuffs, fuel, vehicles and spare parts, building materials, clothes--and exports mainly iron ore and fish. The debt service as a percentage of exports rose between 1998 (24.5%) and 1999 (25.5%). This increase is mainly attributable to increased debt service in 1999.

TRADE TRENDS: The creation of private exchange offices and the liberalization of exchange systems have facilitated an increase in external trade over the last three years. Total exports increased by 11.3% (in local currency) despite a continuing weak world market for iron ore and problems in the fishing sector. Total imports, however, declined by 10% in the same period due to the good harvest registered in 1999/2000, which reduced food imports from the previous year. Iron ore continued to be the pillar of Mauritania' exports, representing 58% of the total. Fish exports increased in 1999, contributing 41% of total exports. This trend is likely to continue in 2000.

FOREIGN DEBT: Mauritania's outstanding foreign debt was problematic and was estimated at 220% of GDP. But with the recent debt cancellation and rescheduling, the economy is liberated from the debt service payment problems. This decision will allow the economy a respite necessary for achieving its targets.

FOREIGN INVESTMENT: Foreign investment, interrupted since the 1989-91 ethnic clashes, has resumed timidly in the past three years. Concerned about the importance of foreign investment to economic growth, the GIRM is introducing new measures to attract local private and foreign investors. The revision of the investment code is focused on this goal. France and Arab Maghreb Union countries are the largest source of foreign investment. The Belgium Belgolaise bank is a largest foreign shareholder in local commercial banks. Private bank owners are seeking foreign partners.

ADEQUACY OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE SYSTEM

Mauritania's infrastructure for the distribution of goods and services continues to be poor compared to neighboring countries. Accordingly, the GIRM made infrastructure development (mainly land conversion and road construction and repair) a top priority in the 1999-2000 public investment budget. The Government is undertaking these infrastructure improvements with the understanding that light industry can only develop fully when it has an adequate transportation network to move raw materials and finished goods.

AIR TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE: Mauritania has one air transport company, the recently privatized Air Mauritanie, which provides regular domestic and international flights between Nouakchott and Casablanca, Dakar, Las Palmas, Bamako, Banjul, Conakry, and Abidjan. With three international airports, (Nouakchott, Nouadhibou, and Nema), international travelers are served by Air France (twice a week) and Air Afrique (four times a week). The Nouakchott airport also receives regular flights weekly from Moroccan, Tunisian, Algerian, and Senegalese carriers. Three airports in the interior were repaired in 1999; these improvements will increase the movement of people and goods from Nouakchott to these localities. In June 2000, the GIRM privatized Air Mauritanie by selling 64.46% of its shares to private local and foreign companies. The company is now operating with only two Fokker F-28 airplanes, one owned and one leased. Its interest in acquiring a Boeing plane has been stymied by the unavailability of long-term financing.

ROADS: The quantity and quality of roads leaves much to be desired, particularly in the interior. The country's size and climatic conditions make infrastructure maintenance (and travel) particularly difficult. Mauritania possesses about 2,000 km of paved roads, 1,500 km of modern unsurfaced roads, 8,000 km of tracks, and 670 km of railroad line dedicated to carrying iron ore from Zouerate to Nouadhibou in the north. All other goods are distributed in country by trucks or planes. Road improvement is necessary to incorporate and provide access to isolated localities, as well as to facilitate the movement of people and goods.

MARITIME TRANSPORT**:** Mauritania has two seaports. The Chinese-built deep-water port in Nouakchott has a capacity of about 1.5M metric tons a year. This "Port of Friendship" is the country's main commercial port and receives about 90% of imported goods. It frequently receives ships from France, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Holland, China, and Japan, and once in a while, the United States. The second seaport, situated in the northern economic center of Nouadhibou, is mostly dedicated to fish and iron exports, particularly to Europe and Japan.

MEDIA: The Government-controlled broadcast media in Mauritania are characterized by limited channels of dissemination and the concentration of resources in Nouakchott. Mauritanian Television (TVM) has only one channel but can be easily received via satellite in all twelve of Mauritania's regional capitals. Radio Mauritanie (RDM) has three transmitters (FM, MW, and SW), and its broadcasts are received throughout the country. Most TVM and RDM programs are in Arabic, but there are some news broadcasts in French. The three other national languages (Pulaar, Soninke, and Wolof) are also broadcast. Independent newspapers of many stripes are proliferating in Nouakchott. The newspapers, radio, and television accept advertisements.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS: The telecommunications system has undergone considerable modernization and expansion in recent years. Thanks to GIRM efforts through the American company Harris Corporation, it is now possible to place international calls from all twelve regional capitals by dialing direct or using telex or fax. Both modernization and privatization of the telecommunications sector are underway. In 1999, the Government engaged Harris to increase the capacity of its previous installations. The national phone company, Mauritel, will soon be privatized. The GIRM is looking for a strategic partner to buy a majority of it by the end of 2001. This May, a Mauritanian-Tunisian joint venture won the potentially lucrative cellular phone tender. In urban areas, networking and the Internet are in fashion, and the capacity of the five local ISPs is stretched to the limit.

MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS UNDERWAY

ROAD PROJECTS: The GIRM's commitment to improving roads in 2000 aims to facilitate transport, link the remote interior with urban areas, and increase internal trade. To this end, the GIRM has contracted loans and invested in highway construction and repair. Roads currently under construction or being repaired include the Rosso-Boghe (205 km), Nouakchott-Nema (1,150 km), and Aioun, Mauritania-Nioro, Mali roads. In addition, feasibility studies for the construction of Tidjikja-Chinguitti-Atar (445 km), Tidjikja-Aoujeft-Atar (395 km), and Nouakchott-Nouadhibou (470 km) roads are in progress. The GIRM is seeking financing.

POWER GENERATION: Mauritania relies on imports to meet all commercial energy requirements. The completion of the OMVS hydroelectric power project is Mauritania's foremost objective. The "Societe Nationale d'Eau et d'Electricite" (SONELEC), the energy and water company, will be privatized soon. Meanwhile, the company's director is working to

ensure reliable oil access and to develop the supply of electrical power. Power projects underway include the extension of the Nouakchott electricity grid capacity by adding two motors of 7MW each to the existing six motors.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS**:** Earlier this year, the postal and telecommunications sectors were separated. The Government is seeking reliable partners to bid on taking over the work of the former OPT (state postal and telecommunications company). In June, the IBRD approved a $10.8M credit to the GIRM for developing and executing a privatization strategy and expanding access to communications and information services.

HYDRAULIC PROJECTS: The GIRM's main objective is to satisfy fully the demand for potable water in urban and rural areas by the end of 2000. To this end, projects have been implemented and planned to renovate and maintain the sanitation network, drill wells in the interior, and increase water storage capacity in Nouadhibou and Nouakchott. A study (the Aftout el-Sahali project) has begun on supplying water for Nouakchott from the Senegal River.

III. POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

OVERVIEW

Mauritania is a Sahelien country of crosscutting Arab and African influences. It is seeking with limited resources to surmount a history of nomadic poverty, Arab nationalism, and socialist misadventure by building a sedentary, pluralist democracy and market-based economy. Twice the size of France (1.09M sq. km) but with only 2.6M people, Mauritania has the world's third lowest population density after Mongolia and Namibia. Its pluralist society is roughly 70% Arabic-speaking Moors (30% white Moors and 40% black or mixed Moors) and 30% members of the southern-based ethnic groups, Pulaar, Soninke, and Wolof. Virtually all are Sunni Muslims. Located at the western edge of the Sahara with 500 miles of Atlantic coastline, Mauritania shares borders with the Western Sahara and Algeria to the north, Mali to the east and south, and Senegal to the south. The country is 90% desert. At independence in 1960, 85% of the population was nomadic. Today only 5% remain nomads, and fully one-third of the population lives in Nouakchott.

A one-party state virtually from independence until July 1978 and a military dictatorship from 1978-92, Mauritania has made notable but uneven progress since it adopted a democratic constitution in 1991 and held its first multiparty presidential elections in 1992. The 1991 Constitution provides for a civilian government composed of a dominant executive branch, a Senate and National Assembly, and an independent judiciary. President Maaouya Ould Sid' Ahmed Taya has governed since 1984, first as head of a military junta, and since 1992 as elected head of a civilian government. In December 1997, Taya was reelected President, receiving over 90% of the vote in an election marred by fraud and boycotted by the opposition. While some 24 opposition parties are active, the legislature remains overwhelmingly in the hands of the ruling

party, the PRDS. The judiciary remains vulnerable to outside influences. There is an active independent press that is sometimes censored by the Government.

Mauritania is divided into thirteen regions (called wilayas), including the district of Nouakchott. An appointed governor (wali), who represents the Ministry of Interior, heads each wilaya. Elected local mayors' councils, however, hold limited authority. The Mauritanian administration is highly centralized, with all major offices and agencies headquartered in the capital.

MAURITANIA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES

The United States was the first country to recognize Mauritania's independence in 1960, and from 1960-67, relations between the United States and Mauritania were cordial. In June 1967, Mauritania broke diplomatic relations with the United States to show solidarity with the Arab countries during the Israeli-Arab war. In December 1969, US-Mauritanian relations resumed and remained cordial until 1989. From 1981 to 1992, the United States provided about $100M in economic and food assistance. US-Mauritanian relations worsened during the 1989-91 period due to human rights abuses committed by the Mauritanian military during the ethnic clashes and to the GIRM's pro-Iraq stance during the Gulf War. The US Government subsequently closed the USAID mission in Nouakchott, ceased economic development military assistance, and suspended Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) privileges. Relations gradually improved since then, as Mauritania adopted a democratic constitution, held elections, strengthened democratic institutions, improved its human rights record, and worked to improve the welfare of former slaves. The US restored GSP benefits to Mauritania on June 30, 1999 and supported debt relief for Mauritania in March 2000. The US has also established a Humanitarian Demining Program in Mauritania. Mauritania has consistently supported the Middle East Peace Process and extended full diplomatic relations to Israel in October 1999. The US and Mauritanian governments currently cooperate on a range of international issues and enjoy excellent relations.

MAURITANIA'S POLITICAL SYSTEM

Mauritania is currently among the more stable West African states. A member of both the Arab League and the Organization of African Unity, Mauritania generally tends to coordinate its positions on multilateral issues with them. In recent years, the GIRM has supported the Middle East Peace Process and recognized Israel, which opened an embassy in Nouakchott. Mauritania is also an observer in the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue. On December 12, 1999, the GIRM announced its intention to withdraw from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), primarily due to its opposition to a unified currency. The GIRM has since sought to strengthen relations with ECOWAS countries on a bilateral basis, particularly with its partners in the Senegal River Development Organization (OMVS), Senegal and Mali, and with other countries where Mauritania has significant expatriate communities, such as Gambia, Cote d'Ivoire Guinea Bissau and Benin.

Mauritania continues to belong to the following international organizations:
- United Nations
- World Bank
- International Monetary Fund
- African Development Bank
- Organization of African Unity
- Arab League
- Arab Monetary Fund
- Arab Maghreb Union
- Organization of the Islamic Conference
- Interstate Committee to Combat Sahel Drought (CILSS)
- Non-Aligned Countries
- Air Afrique
- Agency for the Security of African Air Navigation (ASECNA)
- Organization for the Development of the Senegal River (OMVS)
- Accord de Non-Agression et d'Assistance en Matière de Défense

The GIRM's 2000 policy guidelines presented by Prime Minister Cheikh El Avia Ould Mohamed Khouna focus on sustainable development and growth, poverty alleviation, education, health improvement, and tax reform. The Government promised to modernize the administration; reform the law; create favorable conditions for economic growth; effect policies necessary to attract foreign investments; develop agriculture, mining, fishing, and tourism; increase exports; increase per capita income; and control inflation.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND BUSINESS-TO-GOVERNMENT DIALOGUE

The President and Prime Minister make themselves available to the business community, which is considered the essential engine of economic growth and poverty alleviation. Since 1998, the GIRM has intensified its dialogue with private business organizations such as the "Confederation Generale des Employeurs de Mauritanie" and the "Federation des Transporteurs" to elicit their support for national development programs. As a result, they undertook steps in 1998 and 1999 to develop the industrial, agricultural, and tourism sectors.

IV. MARKETING US PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

ESTABLISHING A LOCAL OFFICE

The GIRM encourages the creation of new enterprises. The Investment Promotion Office ("Guichet Unique de l'Investissement") and the Mauritanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry offer assistance and advice to those wishing to establish a business office in Mauritania. Two guides on how to do business in Mauritania are available from the commercial library of

American Embassy Nouakchott. The Employers' Association maintains listings of business consultants.

CREATING A JOINT VENTURE

Mauritania's existing joint ventures are primarily with other Arab countries and are mainly in the mineral, fishing, and banking sectors. However, Mauritanians seek to expand such ventures with foreign partners in diverse enterprises, and the GIRM offers a wide range of incentives. American companies are advised to select an experienced Mauritanian partner who is knowledgeable of local procedures and regulations and maintains good relations with Government officials.

USE OF AGENTS/DISTRIBUTORS

Local businessmen frequently express interest in representing US companies, and the number of those doing so is growing. Commercial agents are mainly used in the computer, vehicle, heavy equipment, oil product, pharmaceutical, cosmetics, communications, tobacco, and transit sectors. In general, these agents have a written contract, and they negotiate sales and purchases on behalf of producers, manufactures, or dealers.

FINDING A LOCAL PARTNER AND ATTORNEY

Since Mauritanians are very interested in working with foreign firms, finding a local partner is easy. However, one should proceed with caution to select someone capable and honest who has experience in the field, a good local reputation, solid finances, and Government connections. Establishing an enterprise does not require a contract with a lawyer, but consultation with one is advised. The American Embassy in Nouakchott keeps an updated list of local lawyers.

DISTRIBUTION AND SALES CHANNELS

Almost all of Mauritania's imported goods arrive at Nouakchott's "Friendship Port." From there, they are forwarded to wholesalers, distributors, or retailers via trucks and trailers. Most goods are sold through small shops (boutiques), although medium-sized stores (supermarkets) are increasingly popular in Nouakchott. Large wholesalers and retailers (a few small and medium-sized family-owned firms) import large quantities of consumer goods. Agents operating on commission deal mainly in computers.

SELLING FACTORS/TECHNIQUES

Buying decisions in Mauritania are based primarily on price, quality, product expiration date, and country of origin. Labeling should be in French and/or Arabic.

ADVERTISING AND TRADE PROMOTION

There are few qualified advertising agencies in Mauritania. In general, advertising is done in Arabic and French through newspapers, magazines, radio, and TV. There are about twenty newspapers. The most prominent are as follows:

Journal HORIZONS
B.P. 467
Nouakchott, Mauritania
Tel: [222] 25-58-83
Fax: [222] 25-31-70/25-45-87
Mr. Mohamed Ould Hamady, Director

LE CALAME
B.P. 1059
Nouakchott, Mauritania
Fax: [222] 25-75-55
Mr. Habib Ould Mahfoud, President and Managing Director

LA TRIBUNE
B.P. 6227
Nouakchott, Mauritania
Tel: [222] 25-44-92
Fax: [222] 25-02-09
Mr. Mohamed Fall Ould Oumère, President and Managing Director

MAGHREB HEBDO
B.P. 5266
Nouakchott, Mauritania
Tel: [222] 25-98-10
Fax: [222] 25-98-11
Mr. Khattri Ould Dié, President and Managing Director

L'Eveil Hebdo
B.P. 387
Nouakchott, Mauritanie
Tel & Fax: [222] 25-67-14
Mr. Sy Mamoudou, President and Managing Director

Nouakchott Info
B.P. 1905
Nouakchott, Mauritanie

Tel: [222] 25-02-71
Fax: [222] 25-54-84
Mr. Cheikhna Ould Nenni, President and Managing Director

Graphic billboards on major thoroughfares are an important advertising medium for the largely illiterate public. The number of billboards is increasing rapidly in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou, as they are a relatively inexpensive means of advertising. Trade events, such as shows, exhibitions, and fairs, are almost non-existent in Mauritania. Information generally passes through the country by word of mouth.

GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT PRACTICES

Sales to the GIRM are usually made through foreign government tenders (avis d'appel d'offres). Direct negotiations are used for small projects suitable for local company bids. In such cases, the government agencies concerned issue their own tenders and negotiate directly with local suppliers. Major projects are usually guaranteed by an international financial entity, which determines the source market of the project equipment and materials. Tender decisions are often based on experience in the field. The GIRM's Central Procurement Board ("Commission Centrale des Marchés"), which falls under the Prime Minister's authority, is responsible for monitoring compliance with procurement regulations and conducting most government negotiations with foreign suppliers. Deadlines for bidding on tenders vary from 30 to 45 days, depending on the size and complexity of the project. The Government often requires bidders to submit letters of interest to be included on a short list prior to the issuance of the tender. Then a restricted tender is issued only to short-listed companies. Therefore, it is very important to be informed ahead of the tender publication.

V. LEADING SECTORS FOR US EXPORTS AND INVESTMENT

Independent of overall economic conditions, three market segments offer good prospects for US exporters over the near term: foodstuffs (especially wheat, flour, rice, powdered milk, and canned food), mining equipment (machinery and trucks), and telecommunications equipment.

BEST PROSPECTS FOR NON-AGRICULTURAL GOODS AND SERVICES

Industrial sector statistics on the best prospects for US business are not available. However, potential sales exist for US mining equipment exporters, since iron ore sales are usually in USD, and SNIM prefers to purchase from dollar-based suppliers. In addition to the mining sector, telecommunications, fishing, and alternative energy generation offer opportunities to US suppliers.

Best prospects are (in USD millions):

Rank	Total imports from the United States	Products
1	11.7	Machine spare parts
2	7.4	Mining tractors and heavy vehicles
3	1.6	Cigarettes and food

Source: Mauritanian Customs

In addition, the following are considered market opportunities for US exports:

- Mining equipment
- Telecommunications equipment and service
- Pharmaceutical products
- Medical equipment
- Computers, hardware, and software
- Spare parts, accessories, and tools
- Cigarettes
- Wind and solar energy systems
- Cosmetics and toiletries

In addition to these items, Mauritania imports a large quantity of oil and clothing. In 1999, Mauritania imported goods worth nearly $26M from the United States, representing a 7.8% share of total imports in that year and a 20% decrease compared to 1998. As a former French colony most of whose businesspeople speak French, Mauritania retains strong commercial ties with France. The French maintain a strong commercial presence through export credits, loans, and economic development assistance. In 1999, France was the first client and supplier of Mauritania, and this trend is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. The proximity of the Canary Islands makes Spain another important trading partner.

In 1999, SNIM imported US mining equipment and spare parts totaling $14.9M, representing 26% of the company's purchases for the year. The largest Mauritanian importer of US-made equipment, SNIM considers its 50 US suppliers its best. In 1999-00, SNIM pursues a policy of diversification. Its projects include the following:

- Improvement of the Guelb mines plant
- Development of the tourism sector
- Prospecting for gold, silver, and copper
- Expansion of the existing electricity and water production capacity

SNIM is still interested in locating new suppliers of mining equipment, electricity stations, water supply technologies, and geological research machinery, as well as tourism partners.

BEST PROSPECTS FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

GIRM's decision to eliminate the monopoly of the state food importing company, SONIMEX, led private merchants to import substantial quantities of wheat, flour, rice, and sugar. As seen below, Mauritania's cereal production in 1998-99 covered only 35% of its total needs. The GIRM still seeks food aid and encourages commercial imports of cereals to cover the food deficit. Following is the cereal import forecast in metric tons:

	1998-99	1999-00*	2000-01**
Total market size	527,294	543,200	559,000
Total local production	189,709	244,000	275,000
Total exports	0	0	0
Cereal aid	9,500	16,200	12,000
Total imports	328,085	287,000	272,000
Total imports from US	0	0	

*The 1999/00 statistics are official estimates.
**The 2000/01 statistics are projections.
Source: CILSS/FAO

The best opportunities for US exporters of agricultural products and materials are as follows:

- Grains
- Agricultural machinery and commodities
- Water supply equipment
- Well-drilling and irrigation equipment

VI. TRADE REGULATIONS AND STANDARDS

TARIFF AND NON-TARIFF BARRIERS

In spite of relatively high tariffs, import demand is growing. The import tax is usually based on the local market value of the item instead of the amount listed on the commercial invoice. Customs uses a reference list of items with the respective import taxes and duties. Foreign investors frequently complain of corruption and complexity in customs procedures. Following are some non-tariff barriers that the GIRM is committed to changing:

LIMITED INFRASTRUCTURE: A major barrier to trade and investment is that the country's limited infrastructure makes the transport of persons and goods difficult and expensive. There are few paved roads, only one railroad line (used for transporting iron), limited air and maritime

transportation, lack of electricity in many localities in the interior, and a dearth of potable water. However, several development projects due to be complete in 2002 are designed to address these deficiencies.

COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS: Arabic is the official language, but French is used in almost all international business activities. A small but growing number of businesspeople can conduct business in English. Consumer product literature in Arabic and/or French is preferable. Mauritanian commercial practices are French-based, but this should not constitute a significant barrier to US exports to Mauritania.

CUSTOMS REGULATIONS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

All imported goods, except those previously exempted by law, are subject to import duties. Import duties are generally calculated according to the goods' original invoice price (CIF value). When the buyer does not present the original invoice, Customs evaluates the market value of the product and applies the respective rate. Mauritania is one of the underdeveloped countries benefiting from the ten-year exemption to apply the WTO requirements. Imported goods must be declared at Customs after landing, and the Societe Generale de Surveillance (SGS) inspects their quality and quantity and compares these with the invoice. Customs procedures are extremely complicated and discouraging for importers who are not familiar with the Mauritanian system. The GIRM has significant work to do in this regard. Clearance through customs is often facilitated or not according to whether bribes are paid. Following is Customs contact information:

Colonel N'Diaga Dieng
Directeur General des Douanes
Boite Postale 198
Nouakchott, Mauritanie
Tel: [222] 25-14-04 or 25-63-02; Fax: [222] 25-56-15 or 25-63-04
Friendship Port Customs Tel: [222] 25-34-18

TARIFF RATES

The GIRM's 2000 Financial Law focused on a Government revenue increase along with a reduction of customs taxes. The number of different taxes has been reduced from five to four, with the introduction of "Droit Fiscal à l'Importation," which replaced two existing taxes that applied to imports. The new law facilitates the imports of essential goods and streamlines the system of collecting customs duties. However, taxes continue to weigh heavily on importers. The tax rate ranges from 9 to 27% for non-luxury goods according to the nature of the items and their utility for consumers. Value Added Tax (VAT) rates on imported goods are divided in two categories: 5% for goods considered essential and 14% for non-essential goods. The VAT is not applied to exported goods.

PROHIBITED IMPORTS AND US-IMPOSED EXPORT CONTROLS

In accordance with Islamic strictures, Mauritanians are prohibited from importing alcoholic drinks and pork. Imports of firearms are also prohibited. Due to Mauritania's establishment of ties with Israel, the Arab League-imposed secondary and tertiary boycotts against Israel are no longer enforced. There are no restrictions on US exports to Mauritania for non-prohibited goods.

IMPORT TAXES AND LICENSES REQUIREMENTS

Import taxes are comparatively high. The GIRM plans to reduce taxes on imported goods to about 20% in the coming years. The cost and conditions of obtaining the import/export license had been discouraging for small and medium traders, but liberalization has facilitated their access. Industrial companies can obtain an import licenses relatively easily.

SPECIAL IMPORT/EXPORT REQUIREMENTS AND CERTIFICATIONS

The documents generally required of Mauritanian importers include the commercial invoice, the bill of lading or certificate of origin, and the certificate of inspection given by "Société Générale de Surveillance." The commercial invoice should contain the name and address of seller and buyer; place and date the invoice was prepared; method of shipment; quantity, description, and price of goods; and delivery and payment terms. Payments are usually made through irrevocable and confirmed Letters of Credit under the control of the Central Bank of Mauritania or through direct transfer from the bank of the importer abroad to the bank of the exporter. To further facilitate import procedures, the Minister of Commerce can grant special authorization to Mauritanians who do not hold a regular import/export license. In such cases, applicants should specify the quality and quantity of the items, country of origin, and date of import. Importers require pre-shipment inspection and quality control. The certificate of inspection should accompany the imported goods. Mauritania's memberships in the World Trade Organization and EU/Africa Caribbean Pacific (EU/ACP) Lomé Pact have contributed momentum to its trade liberalization policies.

FREE TRADE ZONES

There are no free trade zones in Mauritania. However, UNCTAD-supported free trade zones are under consideration.

VI. INVESTMENT CLIMATE

OPENNESS TO FOREIGN INVESTMENT

GOVERNMENT ATTITUDE TOWARD FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT

The GIRM encourages foreign direct investment, pursues economic liberalization, and sees the private sector as the main engine of economic growth. The investment code in force is aimed at stimulating competition and attracting foreign capital and investment.

LAWS, RULES, AND REGULATIONS GOVERNING INVESTMENT

Privatization, liberalization, and incentives to investment have figured prominently in Mauritania's latest World Bank and IMF-inspired economic programs. The GIRM believes that private enterprise will be the engine of economic development and growth. The GIRM is still updating the 1989 investment code under World Bank and other development partners' directives. The new investment code is intended to attract foreign and domestic investors. In 1988 and 1989, the GIRM issued three investment documents covering investment policy: the 1988 Maritime Fisheries Code (ordinance no. 88.144), the 1988 Hydrocarbons Code (ordinance no. 88.151), and the broadly applicable 1989 Investment Code (ordinance no. 89.013). In March 1998, the mining code was updated, and in November 1999, the new commercial code draft was issued. Ordinance no. 89.013 defines the framework and conditions of investments in Mauritania, guarantees for investors, and incentives granted to those who contribute to achieving the Government's priority objectives (Art. 1). The GIRM makes the following guarantees to any entity wishing to invest capital in compliance with the regulations in force (ordinance no. 89.013):

-- availability of hard currency to import all goods and services needed for the operation of the enterprise and for repaying loans contracted (Art. 3);

-- freedom to transfer foreign capital (Art. 4);

-- ability to transfer professional income of foreign employees (Art. 4);

-- protection of vested interests (Art. 5);

-- equal treatment of Mauritanian and foreign individuals and legal entities (Art. 5)

SCREENING MECHANISMS FOR FOREIGN INVESTMENT

The Private Investment Promotion Office (PIPO), created by ordinance no. 68/98 of March 1998, selects private major investment projects and recommends their approval by the Council of Ministers, chaired weekly by the President. This office is intended to promote private investment and contribute to poverty alleviation. The PIPO has eliminated previous administrative procedures and consequently facilitated investment agreements. From January 1999 to March 2000, the Council of Ministers approved 61 investment projects totaling $103M under PIPO

recommendations. Vendors for GIRM-directed large projects are usually selected through a tender process. After issuing an invitation to tenders, the "Commission Centrale des Marches" chooses the offer that best fulfills GIRM requirements. The screening mechanisms are routine and non-discriminatory. They do not serve as an impediment to investment and do not limit competition.

SECTORAL OR GEOGRAPHIC PREFERENCES

There are no closed sectors, and the mining, fishing, banking, energy and tourism sectors actively seek foreign direct investment. The investment code identifies (Art. 2) 20 areas in which certain advantages, such as duties or tax incentives, can be guaranteed. The GIRM thus provides incentives for businesses that contribute to the following national goals:

-- promoting small- and medium-sized enterprises;

-- developing exports of Mauritanian-manufactured products;

-- enhancing the value of internal resources (labor and raw materials);

-- establishing activities in the interior of the country
(Enterprises located outside of Nouakchott and Nouadhibou benefit from a temporary reduction of the annual amount of tax due on industrial and commercial profits.)

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST FOREIGN INVESTORS

There is no discrimination against foreign investors in the Mauritanian investment code. Foreign investors receive the same treatment as Mauritanian investors, subject to the provisions of treaties and agreements concluded by GIRM with other states (Art. 6.3). Foreign investors have the same access as Mauritanians to courts of law (Art. 6.4).

Foreign investors are encouraged to participate in privatization programs; they are treated the same as Mauritanians in the privatization programs directed by the World Bank. Nonetheless, the success of foreign investors is largely attributed to their local partners.

DISCRIMINATORY OR PREFERENTIAL IMPORT/EXPORT POLICIES FOR FOREIGN INVESTMENT

There is no discrimination against foreign investors importing or exporting goods or services. Mauritania is a signatory of the EU/ACP Lome Convention, which gives underdeveloped nations certain advantages and preferential treatment when exporting or importing some products to or from EU member countries. Mauritania is also a member of Arab Maghreb Union, which was created in 1988 to work toward the political and economic integration of Algeria, Libya,

Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia. Stated economic goals include a common market with a single currency, Maghreb-wide corporations, unified customs zones, and freedom of movement for capital and individuals.

In sum, Mauritania currently has no discriminatory policies against foreign investment or against imports from any region or country.

CONVERSION AND TRANSFER POLICIES

There are no legal or policy restrictions on converting or transferring funds associated with an investment. Any individual or legal entity that has invested joint or foreign capital is guaranteed the free transfer of convertible currencies at a legal market rate, subject to the availability of such currencies (Art. 4).

The local currency, the ouguiya, is now freely convertible. Hard currencies can be found either in commercial banks or in private exchange offices. Hard currencies may also be obtained in the parallel market with a slightly higher exchange rate. The official exchange rate is currently 239 ouguiya to the dollar. Foreigners working in Mauritania can transfer a portion of their earnings on a regular basis. Upon conclusion of their work in Mauritania, they are authorized to transfer all of their assets.

As a practical matter, however, foreign investors have experienced delays of two to five months, depending on the personal relationship between them (or their local partners) and Central Bank officials in obtaining release of foreign exchange. Payments to affiliated suppliers and dividend repatriation have been held up for months because of the Central Bank's ongoing shortage of foreign exchange. The situation has improved slightly since the 1998 liberalization governing the availability of hard currencies in exchange bureaus. Remittance through a parallel market is illegal. However, investors can acquire hard currency in the parallel market and deposit it in their foreign accounts abroad.

EXPROPRIATION AND COMPENSATION

Article 5.2 of the Investment Code assures that if measures of expropriation, nationalization, or requisition are taken, the GIRM will provide appropriate compensation according to common practice and international law. Such compensation is exempt from dues, duties, and taxes.

Since the independence of Mauritania, only one nationalization has taken place. In November 1974, the GIRM nationalized the mining company, in which French partners were the majority shareholders. Compensation was paid according to mutual agreement between the two parties.

DISPUTE SETTLEMENT

Interpretation of the Mauritanian investment code is the responsibility of the competent Mauritanian courts in accordance with the laws and regulations in force. Disputes between individuals or legal entities and the GIRM related to the investment code are settled according to one of the following procedures of arbitration:

-- by agreements and treaties concerning the protection of investments concluded between the GIRM and the state to which the individual or legal entity concerned belongs;

-- by procedure of conciliation and arbitration to which both parties have agreed;

-- according to the March 1986 IBRD Convention on the Settlement of Disagreements Related to Investments Between States and Citizens of Other States or the 1958 New York Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards, of which Mauritania is a member. With the new investment code in draft, the GIRM hopes to ratify several international conventions and treaties intended to provide guarantees to foreign investors.

PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS/INCENTIVES

Mauritania is in a transitional period for the application of WTO regulations/notifications. The GIRM offers tax benefits, including exemptions in some instances, to enterprises in the priority sectors listed in its investment code. In the case of imported dumped goods deemed to be competing unfairly with a priority enterprise, the GIRM will respond to requests for tariff surtaxes. Priority enterprises thus enjoy some potential protection from competition. That is, the priority enterprises can ask to benefit during all or part of the first three years of operations from a digressive tariff surtax levied on competing imported products. The GIRM is often willing to provide free land for industrial and farming investments.

There are no performance requirements beyond those that might be agreed to in individual investment agreements. There are no statutory export requirements or targets. There are no requirements for local financing. There are some precepts governing the percentage of host country nationals employed, but the GIRM is flexible on this matter. Industrial fishing crews are required to have, on average, five Mauritanian crewmembers per vessel. To qualify for the preferential tax treatment accorded to priority enterprises, Article 12 encourages companies to purchase locally-sourced goods where possible, and to employ and train Mauritanian staff at all levels.

RIGHT TO PRIVATE OWNERSHIP AND ESTABLISHMENT

Foreign and domestic private entities have the right to establish and own business enterprises and engage in all forms of remunerative activity, provided they respect the law and regulations in force in Mauritania. They also have right to freely establish, acquire, and dispose of interests in business enterprises (Art. 3.4). The privatization and liberalization programs led to the

application of the competitive equality standard to private enterprises with respect to access to markets and credits.

PROTECTION OF PROPERTY RIGHTS

Property rights are protected under the Mauritanian civil code, which is modeled on the French one. However, impartial application of the law by the Mauritanian judiciary has been a problem for some local companies. Mauritania's banks, for example, have had difficulty getting local courts to enforce banks' right under loan agreements to seize pledged assets from local merchants. The civil code protects and facilitates acquisition of all property rights.

Mauritania is a member of the Multinational Investment Guaranty Agency and the African Organization of Intellectual Property. In joining the latter, member states agreed to honor intellectual property rights principles and to establish uniform procedures of implementation. These international agreements include the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property, the Berne Convention For the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works, the Hague Convention for the Registration of Designs and Industrial Models, the Lisbon Convention for the Protection and International Registration of Original Trade Names, the World Intellectual Property Organization, the Washington Treaty on Patents, and the Vienna Treaty on the Registration of Trade Names.

TRANSPARENCY OF THE REGULATORY SYSTEM

From 1989 to the present, the GIRM has introduced a number of measures and policies to foster competition: privatization, liberalization of trade, promotion of private enterprise and private initiative, etc. To apply these measures, the GIRM has adopted a variety of laws and procedures, including measures banning anti-competitive practices and authorizing the creation of consumer interest groups.

To streamline bureaucratic procedures for investment, in 1997 the GIRM created the Mauritanian Investment Window, a one-stop shop intended to enable investors to comply with Government requirements at a central location. In 1998, this office was renamed the Investment Promotion Office, and its services were expanded. Since 1998, this office has approved about eighty industrial projects.

EFFICIENT CAPITAL MARKETS AND PORTFOLIO INVESTMENT

GIRM policies do not discourage the free flow of financial resources; credit is allocated on market terms. There are no restrictions on access to local financial institutions by foreign investors, although most prefer external financing. The GIRM's economic programs adopted restrictive and selective credit policies that gave priority to productive sectors. Banking sector reform has been a critical goal of the Government's economic reorganization. The accounting

system and regulations covering investments are modeled on French conventions. After the restructuring of the banking sector and the introduction of computerization, banking management has improved. Nevertheless, deficiencies persist in the enforcement of laws and regulations.

There are no laws or regulations authorizing private firms to adopt articles of incorporation or association that limit or prohibit foreign investment, participation, or control. There are no private sector or GIRM efforts restricting foreign participation in setting industry standards. Foreign investment is not restricted in Mauritania; in fact, the GIRM seeks foreign direct investment. There are no "cross-shareholding" arrangements, and “stable shareholder” arrangements used by private firms to restrict foreign investment through acquisitions are very limited in number. The GIRM-owned mining company SNIM is 22% owned by Arab countries (mainly Saudi Arabia and Kuwait).

POLITICAL VIOLENCE

There is no political violence in Mauritania. There have no been incidents in recent years involving damage to projects and/or installations. There are no nascent insurrections, belligerent neighbors, or other politically motivated destabilizing activities in Mauritania. In May/June 2000, Mauritania and Senegal clashed over Senegal’s apparent determination to proceed with an ambitious irrigation project that threatened Mauritania’s water supply from the Senegal River. Mauritania and Mali, the other two members of the Senegal River Development Authority (OMVS), disputed Senegal’s right to implement the project. As the dispute heated up, the GIRM ordered an estimated 200,000 Senegalese resident in Mauritania to return to Senegal. The Government of Senegal subsequently agreed to shelve the project and abide by the rules of the OMVS. The GIRM in turn suspended the departure of Senegalese from Mauritania.

CORRUPTION

Corruption exists at all levels of government and society. While Mauritania has laws, regulations, and penalties against corruption, enforcement is very limited. As a result, some wealthy business groups and GIRM officials receive favors from authorities. The meager salaries of GIRM employees at all levels foster corruption. The GIRM is drafting a new penal code that contains clauses aimed at punishing those guilty of corruption. Currently, giving and accepting bribes are not considered criminal acts under Mauritanian law.

Mauritania is not a signatory to the OECD Convention on Combating Bribery. However, no US firm represented here has identified corruption as an obstacle to foreign direct investment. Corruption is most pervasive in GIRM procurement, bank loans, fishing license attribution, land distribution, and taxation. Senior GIRM officials are involved in corruption when they facilitate their staffs’ preferential approval of documents in order to get rewards in return. The Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Interior are the two GIRM entities tasked with combating corruption. The only international organization for transparency that operates in Mauritania is the Société

Générale de Surveillance (SGS), which is a member of the Swiss-based SGS group. SGS-Mauritanie is in charge of the reviewing imported goods for nature, quantity, quality, price, and country of origin.

BILATERAL INVESTMENT AGREEMENTS

Mauritania has bilateral investment agreements with member countries of the Arab Maghreb Union (Algeria, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia), as well as with Saudi Arabia. Since 1987, the GIRM signed with the European Union three fishery agreements; the last one covered the period July 1996-June 2001 and is controversial. Negotiations with the E.U. for a long-term fish agreement are now proceeding. Mauritania has no bilateral investment treaty or bilateral taxation treaty with the United States; however, US companies are welcome in Mauritania.

OPIC

Mauritania currently qualifies for OPIC coverage. Potential investors should contact OPIC directly for guidance.

LABOR

There is no shortage of unskilled manpower in or around major cities (particularly Nouakchott and Nouadhibou). Government sources estimate that unemployment for males over 18 runs is as high as 40 percent. There is, however, a shortage of skilled workers and well-trained technical/managerial personnel in most sectors of the economy except the mining sector, which has adequate skilled workers and top-level managers. However, professional training centers exist in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou; any company or GIRM agency interested in improving its employees' skills may do so. Mauritania's population is quite young, with 65% of citizens under 25.

In consultation with the country's three labor confederations and the employers' federation, the GIRM issues labor laws in which employer-employee relations are defined for both the public and private sectors. The most recent agreement, the 1974 Collective Labor Convention, establishes a broad array of employee benefits, including paid maternity leave. The original labor code of 1963 is still in force. Expatriate employment requires obtaining a work permit, renewable every year, from the Ministry of Labor.

The minimum wage statute is based on a system of job classification defined in the labor code. These wage rates are revised periodically after agreement between the labor and employers' unions and the GIRM. The last revision took place in March 2000, setting the minimum wage at 10,662 ouguiya ($44.54) a month.

FOREIGN TRADE ZONES/FREE PORTS

There are no duty-free import zones.

Foreign Direct Investment Statistics

There is negligible foreign direct investment in Mauritania. Although data on the value of foreign investment is lacking, major foreign private investors include the following:

Local Affiliate	Foreign parent	Nationality
-- Mobil Oil	Exxon/Mobil Oil	American
-- Morak	Minproc, IFC	Australia
-- SIPECO	Ifafood	France
-- MAFCI	n/a	France
-- SODIAP	Potarg	Ireland
-- Famo-Mauritanie	n/a	Morocco
-- SOBOMA	n/a	France
-- Almap	n/a	Algeria
-- Al Asmac	Al-Baraka Group	Saudi Arabia
-- M.C.P.	CNF	China
-- Elf-Mauritanie	Elf Aquitaine	France
-- GBM Bank	Belgolaise	Belgium
-- NAFTEC	Naftal	Algeria
-- Mattel	Tunisie Telecom	Tunisia

TRADE AND PROJECT FINANCING

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE BANKING SYSTEM

With only seven commercial banks, three credit agencies, and four insurance companies, Mauritania's financial sector remains underdeveloped. Previously modeled on the French system, the banking sector has now been restructured and privatized. The GIRM has sold its equity stake in commercial banks and insurance companies. Consequently, banks have considerably increased their capital and instituted stricter management. As a result, banks began to receive more customer deposits and make more rational credit decisions. The Central Bank remains the banking regulatory agency and controls interest rates, commercial bank reserve requirements, and financial and credit management. The Deputy Governor is the president of the Banking Commission in charge of banking system control. The banks' financial statements are in compliance with international standards and are annually audited by local accounting firms. In general, the major shareholders of banks obtain large shares of loans and other bank facilities, like foreign currency, for their private affairs. The GIRM continues to encourage the creation of

popular saving agencies to diversify the financial sector and help small savers in order to promote investment in the development sectors.

FOREIGN EXCHANGE CONTROLS AFFECTING TRADE

As mentioned above, there are no restrictions on transfers of profits or repatriations of capital, royalties, or service fees, provided the investments were authorized and made through approved banks. The foreign exchange system was effectively liberalized in 1996, making the ouguiya freely convertible inside Mauritanian territory. Authority to buy and sell foreign exchange has been delegated to the commercial banks and exchange offices, which carry out transactions upon presentation of appropriate justifying documentation, such as invoices to pay for imports and customs documents. There is also a black market for trading foreign exchange, primarily US dollars and French francs. The disparity between the official rate and the black market rate is currently about 5 percent, and the Central Bank has committed to reducing it to zero by the end of 2000.

GENERAL AVAILABILITY OF FINANCING

Local financing is very limited for Mauritanian investors. Without a guarantor, importers may access bank loans at high interest rates (over 20%) for only a short period of repayment (three to six months). Importers and investors are complaining about the lack of financing, especially after the banking privatization and exchange liberalization.

FINANCING AND METHODS OF PAYMENT TO EXPORT FROM MAURITANIA

Most Mauritanian importers finance through irrevocable and confirmed Letters of Credit issued by local banks. The bank transfer system is also used when required. Some Mauritanian importers hold bank accounts abroad (in France, Spain, Switzerland, or an Arab country) that allow them to pay for their imports directly without involving local banks. Since the exchange liberalization, some small imports are paid in cash.

AVAILABILITY OF PROJECT FINANCING FROM MULTILATERAL SOURCES

Mauritania’s self-financing is insignificant when compared to its financial needs. Overseas direct assistance and loans represent about 85% of its investment budget. Major lenders are the World Bank’s International Development Agency, Kuwaiti Fund (FADES), African Development Fund, African Development Bank, IMF, European Investment Bank, Islamic Bank, and French Cooperation. In 1999, EXIMbank restored coverage of short-term projects in the public and private sectors in addition to introducing a Pilot Program for Africa under which Mauritania is covered. (It is not clear as of publication whether the program will be renewed.) OPIC coverage has also been restored.

Mr. Jean Mazurelle
World Bank Representative in Mauritania
Tel: [222] 25-70-33
Fax: [222] 25-13-34
Program Officer: Mr. Souleymane Sow

TYPES OF PROJECTS RECEIVING FINANCING SUPPORT

Projects financed involve mainly agriculture (land conversion and irrigation) fishing (maritime surveillance), hydraulics (drinking water supply), environmental protection, infrastructure (roads, airports, telecommunications, and electrification of rural areas), education, and health. In 1999 and 2000, Mauritania continued to obtain financing from international institutions (IBRD, African Development Fund, and the EU) for its economic and social development projects. This financing was linked to the GIRM's structural reforms to develop the private sector and promote sustainable use of its natural resources, increase primary school enrollment in under-served regions, alleviate poverty, and improve health care.

BANKS WITH CORRESPONDENT US BANKING ARRANGEMENTS

Banque Mauritanienne pour le Commerce International (BMCI):

- Bankers Trust
- Chemical Bank
- American Express Bank

Banque Nationale de Mauritanie (BNM):

- Bank of America
- Bankers Trust
- Chemical Bank

Banque Al-Baraka Mauritanienne Islamique (BAMIS):

- Arab-American Bank of New York

IX. BUSINESS TRAVEL

Mauritanian businesspeople are becoming more familiar with international business standards. However, American visitors may encounter differences in business and cultural practices. While Mauritanians are generally tolerant and understanding of cultural differences, the following points may improve the chances of a successful business trip to Mauritania.

BUSINESS CUSTOMS

Mauritania is a Muslim country, and consumption of alcohol and pork are forbidden for Mauritanians. The most important characteristic of Mauritanian business practices is courtesy. A handshake is customary upon initiating and closing a business meeting. Rarely, you may encounter a conservative who will not shake hands with a person of the opposite sex, so it is preferable to wait for him or her to offer. A polite Mauritanian will ask you several times, possibly in different ways, how you are. Business encounters should begin with a substantial period of small talk or repartee to make the Mauritanian feel comfortable and help him understand you.

Rank and protocol are important to Mauritanians, and they often (mistakenly or not) believe that they need to work directly with the CEO to make business happen. Business discussions in hotel conference rooms are appreciated. Mauritanians are in general hospitable; they often offer a dinner of mechoui (grilled lamb) to their business partners/visitors and would expect to be treated similarly when they are in the United States. Meals are never shared on a “Dutch treat” basis.

TRAVEL ADVISORY AND VISAS

Although Mauritania is a relatively safe environment, visitors are encouraged to register at the consular section upon arrival and/or consult the Department of State's web site at http:\\travel.state.gov for general and country-specific travel information. To enter, you must have a valid visa, which may be obtained at the Mauritanian Embassy at 2129 Leroy Place, NW, Washington, DC 20008, tel. 202-232-5700. Yellow fever vaccination must be noted on a WHO card. Malaria is prevalent in the south, and malaria prophylaxis (mefloquine) is recommended.

HOLIDAYS

The year 2001 official holidays and other days on which Government offices and private establishments are closed are:

- January 1 (New Year's Day)
- December 28* (Id El Fitr)
- March 5* (Id El Adha)
- March 26* (Islamic New Year)
- May 1 (Labor Day)
- May 25 (Africa Day)
- June 5* (Id El Maouloud)
- November 28 (Independence Day)

Holidays with an asterisk (*) are based on sightings of the moon, may vary slightly from the dates published, and change every year. Such holidays may last two to three days.

Mauritania is on Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) and does not observe Daylight Savings.

WORK WEEK

Businesses operate from Saturday to Thursday, except for banks (and the US Embassy), which operate from Sunday to Thursday. Business hours in Mauritania are generally 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., though many people get a late start. Walk-in hours at banks are 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

LANGUAGE

Arabic is the official language, but international business is conducted in French. Product literature must be in French. The other national languages--Pulaar, Soninké, and Wolof--are widely spoken in the south and center of the country.

HOUSING

Spacious apartments and houses of high quality are available in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou. Rents are linked to house size and location and are inexpensive by American standards.

HOTELS

There are a few international-standard hotels in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou as follows:

NOUAKCHOTT

- Hotel Halima
Telephone: [222] 25-79-20 or 25-79-21; Fax: [222] 25-79-22

- Monotel
Telephone: [222] 25-35-26; Fax: [222] 25-18-31

- Houda Hotel
Telephone: [222] 25-91-71or 25-91-80; Fax: [222] 25-20-11

- Hotel Oasis
Telephone: [222] 25-20-11

NOUADHIBOU

- Hotel Oasian
Telephone: [222] 74-90-42; Fax: [222] 74-90-43

- Hotel Sabah
Telephone: [222] 74-53-17; Fax: [222] 74-54-99

HEALTH

There are five overcrowded government hospitals and about twenty private clinics in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou. Some clinics provide Western-standard health services. The telephone numbers of the hospitals and private clinics are available at the US Embassy. Medicines are sold over the counter in small drugstores in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou. Health concerns include malaria, diarrhea, hepatitis, meningitis, typhoid fever, yellow fever, intestinal parasites, schistosomiasis, rabies, tuberculosis, and AIDS. Yellow fever immunization is required. Validation for cholera may be required for entry. Immunizations recommended include hepatitis A and B, tetanus and diphtheria (Td), polio, and typhoid. Children should be up to date on all immunizations recommended for their age group.

TEMPORARY ENTRY OF GOODS

Personal effects, including professional equipment, that are carried by hand or in luggage may be temporarily imported into Mauritania free of duties and taxes under the Customs Convention on Temporary Importation of Professional Equipment. Goods imported for exhibition may enter under an ATA carnet, which may be obtained from the US Council of the International Chamber of Commerce.

X. APPENDICES

A. ECONOMIC AND TRADE STATISTICS

COUNTRY DATA

Population:	2.6M
Population growth rate:	2.9%
Area:	1,085,760 sq. km. (419,229 sq. mi.)
Religion:	Islam
Government system:	Democratic republic
	President: Maaouya Ould Sid’ Ahmed Taya
	Prime Minister: Cheikh El Avia Ould Mohamed Khouna
Languages:	Arabic (official), French (business)
	Pulaar, Soninké, and Wolof (national)
Climate:	Hot and dry in most parts of the country
Work Week:	Saturday – Thursday, generally from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Sources: Ministry of Economic Affairs and Development, National Office of Statistics

DOMESTIC ECONOMY

(in USD millions, unless otherwise noted)

	1998	1999	2000 projected
GDP (at current market prices)*	1,014	1,004	972
GDP (at constant market prices)*	452	421	375
GDP growth rate*	(12)	(7)	(11)
GDP per capita ($)*	399	386	380
Government spending (as a % of GDP*)	24	21	20
Debt service ratio (as a % of tax receipts)	51	49	46
Inflation rate (as a %)	8	7	9
Average exchange rate (ouguiya/$)	185	208	230

Sources: Ministry of Economic Affairs & Development, World Bank, National Statistics Office

*The GDP, however, increased in local currency by 6.3% in 1998 and 4.7% in 1999 and is expected to increase by 5% in 2000. The decrease of GDP in USD is due to the depreciation of the local currency against the dollar.

TRADE

(In USD millions)

	1998	1999	2000*
Total exports	379	376	373
Total imports	415	332	325
US exports to Mauritania	27	26	28
US imports from Mauritania	0.2	0.05	0.1
US share of Mauritania's imports (as a %)	6.5	7.9	8.6

* Projected

Principal Exports: Seafood (41.4%) and iron ore (58.3%)
Major Markets: France (19%), Italy (15%), Germany (13%), Spain (12%), and Japan (11%)

Principal Imports: foodstuffs, machinery, vehicles and spare parts, oil, tools, construction materials, clothing, and electronics
Major suppliers: France (37%), USA. (8%), Germany (7%), Spain (7%), and Japan (5%)

Principal US exports to Mauritania: heavy vehicles, machinery, mining equipment and supplies, cigarettes, and miscellaneous tools

Principal US imports from Mauritania: Frozen shellfish

Source: Customs Bureau Computerized Project (SYDONIA) and the Central Bank

B. US AND COUNTRY CONTACTS

US MISSION IN MAURITANIA

American Embassy
2430 Nouakchott Place
Washington, DC 20521-2430
Tel: (222) 25-26-60; 25-26-63
Fax: (222) 25-15-92

Ambassador:
Timberlake Foster

Deputy Chief Of Mission
Carol Colloton

Consular, Economic, And Commercial Officer
Katherine Metres until February 2001 metreskm@state.gov
[Peter Chisholm from February 2001]

USEFUL STATESIDE CONTACTS

- US Department of Commerce
  International Trade Administration
  Office of Africa, Mauritania Desk
  Tel: (202) 377-4388

- The Mauritanian Embassy
  2129 Leroy Place, N.W.
  Washington, D.C. 20008
  Tel: (202) 232-5700

For additional information or assistance, please contact the US Department of Commerce Export Assistance Center nearest you.

MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Investment Promotion Office (Guichet Unique des Investissements)
Ministère des Affaires Economiques et Développement
Boite Postale (B.P.) 238
Nouakchott, Mauritanie
Tel: [222] 29-04-35
Fax: [222] 29- 04-35
email: UCP@OPT.mr
Mr. Kelly Oumar Sada, Director

Mauritanian Chamber of Commerce
B.P. 215
Nouakchott, Mauritanie
Tel: [222] 25-22-14
Fax: [222] 25-38-95
Mr. Mahmoud Ould Ahmedou, President
Mr. Habib Ould Ely, Director

Customs Office
Direction Generale des Douanes
Ministère des Finances
B.P. 198
Nouakchott, Mauritanie
Tel: [222] 25-14-04 or 25-63-02
Fax: [222] 25-63-04
Colonel N'Diaga Dieng, Director

National Statistics Office
B.P. 240
Nouakchott, Mauritanie
Tel: [222] 25-30-70, 25-39-26, or 25-51-70
Mr. Sidina Ould N'Dah, Director

Centre d'Information Mauritanien pour le Developpement Economique et Technique (CIMDET)
Ministere du Commerce, de l'Artisanat et du Tourisme
B.P. 2119
Nouakchott, Mauritanie
Tel: [222] 25-87-38
Fax: [222] 25-86-48
Email: cimdet@pactec.org

Mr. Cheibani Ould Mohamed Abdoullah, Director

MAURITANIAN PRIVATE AGENCIES

Mauritanian Employers Federation
B.P. 383
Nouakchott, Mauritanie
Tel: [222] 25-21-60 or 25-33-01
Mr. Mohamed Ould Bouamatou, President
Mr. Cheikh El Moctar El Hassen, Secretary General

Mining and Industry Federation
B.P. 3475
Nouakchott, Mauritanie
Tel: [222] 25-39-74
Mr. Lafdal Ould Bettah, President

Fishing National Federation
B.P. 43
Nouadhibou, Mauritanie
Tel: [222] 74-50-89
Fax: [222] 74-54-30
Mr. Mohamed Mahmoud Sidina Sadegh, Secretary General

Banque Mauritanienne pour le Commerce International (BMCI)
B.P. 622
Nouakchott, Mauritanie
Tel: [222] 25-43-49, 25-43-50, or 25-43-51
Fax: [222] 25-20-45
Mr. Moulaye Abass, President

Banque Nationale de Mauritanie (BNM)
B.P. 614
Nouakchott, Mauritanie
Tel: [222] 25-26-02 or 25-27-07
Fax: [222] 25-33-97
Mr. Mohamed Ould Noueigued, President

Banque Al Baraka Mauritanienne Islamique (BAMIS)
B.P. 650
Nouakchott, Mauritanie
Tel: [222] 25-14-24 or 25-22-66

Fax: [222] 25-16-21
Mr. Abdallahi El Moctar, General Manager

Generale de Banque de Mauritanie (G.B.M.)
B.P. 5558
Nouakchott, Mauritanie
Tel: [222] 25-36-36
Fax: [222] 25-46-47
Mr. Mohamed Ould Bouamatou, President

Banque pour le Commerce et l'Industrie (B.C.I.)
Avenue Gamal Abdel Nasser, no.120
Nouakchott, Mauritanie
Tel: [222] 29-28-76
Fax: [222] 29-28-77
Mr. Isselmou Ould Tagidine, President

AMERICAN COMPANIES AND TRADEMARKS REPRESENTED IN MAURITANIA

Caterpillar
Tel: [222] 25-74-56
Fax: [222] 25-74-55
Mr. Bechir El Hassen, SDPA, Representative

Dell, Echostar, Hewlett-Packard, Lanier, 3M
Tel: [222] 25-57-94
Fax: [222] 25-57-95
Mr. Echbih Ould Ahmed Saleck, Top Technology, Representative

Delta Airlines
Code share with Air France flights to/from Mauritania

DHL
Tel: [222] 25-47-06
Mr. Redwane Ouelladj, Representative

Harris Corporation
Tel: [222] 25-19-46
Fax: [222] 25-54-94
Mr. Chighali Ould Amara, Representative

Hayes Mondial Corporation

Tel: [222] 25-86-37; 25-76-85; 25-11-92
Fax: [222] 25-13-84
Mr. Sidi Ould Maham, MAURAL, Joint Venture Partner

IBM
Tel: [222] 25-29-24
Fax: [222] 25-18-31
Mr. Elimane Kane, Representative

Louis Berger
Tel/Fax:[222] 25-00-54
Mr. Hadrami Ould Maham, Representative

MEDISCO Healthcare Pharmacy
Tel: [222] 25-72-89
Mr. Mohamed Mahmoud Ould Cheikh Abderrahmane, Manager

Mining Services International
Tel: [222] 25-75-31
Fax: [222] 25-75-31
Mr. Noureddine Ould Allaf, Representative

Mobil Oil
Tel: [222] 25-21-26
Fax: [222] 25-23-35
Mr. Taher El Kateb, Representative
Mr. Abderrahmane Ould Deddah, Deputy Representative

Philip Morris
Tel: [222] 25-39-60
Fax: [222] 25-11-59
Mr. Mohamed Ould Bouamatou, Representative

Phyto-Riker Pharmaceuticals
Tel: [222] 25-50-19
Dr. Cheikh Brahim Ould Taki, Representative

UNISYS
Tel: [222] 25-94-34
Fax: [222] 25-90-25
Mr. Abdallahi El Moctar, Representative

UPS
Tel: [222] 25-29-28-89
Fax: [222] 25- 56-57
Mr. Ahmed Baba Ould Azizi, TRANSAC, Representative

WANG
Tel: [222] 25-13-63
Fax: [222] 25-13-64
Mr. Saleh Ould Oubeid, Representative

Sources: Chamber of Commerce (CIMDET) and Embassy Commercial Library