Mauritania

2016 Country Review

COUNTRY WATCH

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Country Overview

Country Overview

MAURITANIA

Mauritania is located in northern Africa, bordering the North Atlantic Ocean. The country presents a cultural contrast, with an Arab-Berber population to the north and black Africans to the south. In 1920, Mauritania became a French colony, and it gained independence in 1960. The country has witnessed repeated coups since its independence. A coup in 1978 ended 17 years of presidential rule and put Mauritania under the military rule until 1992, when the country's first multi-party elections were held. A coup in August 2005 deposed President Taya and ushered in a military council that oversaw a transition to democratic rule. A new democratically-elected government under President Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi was inaugurated in April 2007. After 15 months in power, however, President Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi was overthrown in early August 2008 by a military coup led by General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, who was elected president in July 2009 and remains in power to date. Mauritania is one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world, with most of its land covered by the Sahara desert. The country is highly dependent on a few sources of growth, namely mining, fishing and agriculture.

Key Data

Key Data	
Region:	Africa
Population:	3596702
Climate:	desert; constantly hot, dry, dusty
Languages:	Hasaniya Arabic (official) Pular Soninke Wolof (official)
Currency:	1 ouguiya (UM) = 5 khoums
Holiday:	Independence Day is 28 November (1960), Africa Day is 25 May
Area Total:	1030700
Area Land:	1030400
Coast Line:	754

Mauritania

Country Map

Africa

Regional Map

Chapter 2

Political Overview

History

Archaeological evidence suggests that Berbers, Arabs and black Africans lived beside one another before the spread of the desert drove them southward. Berbers migrated south to the area of Mauritania beginning in the third century C.E. seeking pasture for their herds. Later on, the use of camels aided them in traveling across the desert. This mobility allowed them to establish a network of caravan trading routes and important trading towns.

During this time of development, the Berber Sanhadja Confederation was established and reached its height in the eighth century. From the eighth century to the ninth century, Arab settlers followed the Berbers from the east, and Mauritania's population grew increasingly complex. In the 10th century, however, both the Berber Sanhadja Confederation and the Arab settlers succumbed to invasions from the Kingdom of Ghana.

From the 10th through the 15th century, black African empires of the Western Soudan, such as the aforementioned Kingdom of Ghana, as well as the kingdoms of Mali and Songhai, brought their political infrastructure and cultural influence to the region. Meanwhile, in the 11th century, the Berber forces of the Almoravid Empire conquered much of the western Sahara Desert and established Islam throughout the Mauritanian region. Although they destroyed the Kingdom of Ghana, the black African civilizations continued to dominate the south.

Islamization of Mauritania was a gradual process that began slowly through contacts with Berber and Arab merchants engaged in the important caravan trades. It was rapidly advanced through the Almoravid conquests and spanned more than 500 years of development. Islam functioned as the singular external influence that unified the region of present-day Mauritania. At that time, a few of the more important "marabouts" (holy men) founded some of the most influential Islamic brotherhoods. These still have strong followings in the region today.

In the 12th century, the arrival of Yemeni Arabs led not only to further Islamization of the region, but a process of Arabization as well. Following this trend, a wave of Arab invaders, led by Beni Hassan, arrived in the region in the 16th century. During this time from the 12th through the 16th centuries, the Berber masters of Mauritania lost power and became vassals of their Arab conquerors. Descendants of Arab settlers and warriors usurped the Berbers not only in terms of

political power, but also culturally, as Arabic gradually displaced Berber dialects as the language of the region.

European contact with the region of Mauritania grew between the 15th and the 19th centuries, dominated by the trade for gum arabic. Rivalries among European powers enabled the Moorish (Arab-Berber) population to maintain their independence and later to exact annual payments from France, whose sovereignty over the Senegal River and the Mauritanian coast was recognized by the Congress of Vienna in 1815.

Although penetration beyond the coast and the Senegal River began in earnest under Louis Faidherbe, the governor of Senegal in the mid-1800s, European conquest or "pacification" of the Mauritanian region did not begin until 1900. The French claimed the "Moorish country" as a protectorate in 1903. In 1920, Mauritania became a French colony, but it was not brought under full French control until 1934. Because extensive European contact began so late in Mauritania's history, the traditional social structure with Moors presiding over the black African populace carried over into modern times with little change.

The colonial period had enormous consequences for relations between, and among, Mauritania's various ethnic groups. Primarily, the French occupation led to the return of sedentary farmers of black African origin across the Senegal River into southern Mauritania, an area from which they had been expelled by the warring Moorish nomads in previous centuries.

Under French occupation, slavery was both introduced and legally abolished, but the Mauritania establishment continued to accept the notion of a servile class even after independence, and the social status and economic situation of freed slaves improved very little. The consequences of slavery continue to be manifest in the legal system and other institutions. Many residual social and economic problems inherited from the system of slavery remain, and to date, conflict between Moors and non-Moorish ethnic groups prevail. Modern slavery and other forms of domination of servile groups by elites continue to exacerbate the cleavage.

The history of French colonial policy in Mauritania is closely tied to that of the other French possessions in West Africa, particularly to that of Senegal, upon which Mauritania was economically, politically and administratively dependent until the time of independence. The French policy of assimilation and direct rule, however, was never applied with any vigor in Mauritania, whose system bore more resemblance to Britain's colonial policies of association and indirect rule developed. Colonial administrators relied extensively on Islamic religious leaders and the traditional warrior groups to maintain their rule and carry out their policies.

The colony's area was increased substantially in 1945 when the Hodh region of French Western Soudan (present-day Mali) was administratively transferred to Mauritania. Certain parts of this

territory were ceded back to Mali in territorial adjustments years later. The period also marked a process of administrative decentralization and increased internal autonomy.

Specifically, after World War II, Mauritania, along with the rest of French West Africa, participated in the Overseas Reform Act or "Loi Cadra", which was a series of social and political reforms imposed across the French colonial system. These reforms included the increased authority of elected officials in 1957, and Mauritania's entry into the French Community as an autonomous, but not fully sovereign state, after the French constitutional referendum in 1958.

Although the nationalistic fervor sweeping French West Africa during the period of the 1950s was largely absent in Mauritania, continuous politicking provided training for political leaders and awakened a political consciousness among the populace. Nevertheless, when Mauritania declared itself to be the Islamic Republic of Mauritania in 1958, and then, declared its independence in 1960, its level of political as well as economic development was, at best, embryonic.

Note on History: In certain entries, open source content from the State Department Background Notes and Country Guides have been used. A full listing of sources is available in the Bibliography.

Political Conditions

Post-Independence

Mauritania's post-independence history has been dominated by regional politics. During the first nine years of independence, Mauritania's first civilian president, Moktar Ould Daddah, a Moor, emphasized Mauritania's Arab heritage. His regime also sought to eliminate the friction that resulted from economic, political and social differences between the Moorish and black African components of the population, which could impede the attainment of national unity.

On the matter of international relations, Daddah moved the country toward a nonaligned stance in international affairs. In 1966, Mauritania withdrew from the French Community. In 1973, it withdrew from economic Franc Zone and nationalized many of its industries.

The regime of Daddah was also preoccupied with expansionist designs of Morocco, who claimed the area of Mauritania, and whose military strength constituted a perpetual threat to Mauritania's territorial integrity. This threat was intensified by some of Mauritania's Moorish population who supported unification with Morocco. When Morocco finally recognized Mauritania's independence

and sovereignty, the Daddah regime responded by breaking many of its remaining economic and military ties to France, and establishing closer relations with Arab states, including both Morocco and Algeria.

Western Sahara

By 1975, Mauritania entered a military conflict over the fate of the former Spanish territory, Western Sahara. The war in the Western Sahara was, in large part, due to a struggle by the Polisario Front, a nationalist group made up of Sahrawi (Saharan) people, for national self-determination. Because the Sahrawi claimed to have shared ethnic ties with Mauritania's Moorish population, Mauritania became increasingly implicated and involved in the nationalist agenda.

Regionally, however, the war was a power struggle between Algeria, which supported the front militarily, and Morocco, which occupied the territory. Mauritania's participation in the war began with its claim to, and occupation of, a southern province in the Western Sahara, an action designed to strategically prevent Morocco from occupying the entire territory. At the same time, the Daddah regime hoped to strengthen relations with Morocco by cooperating in the occupation of the Western Sahara.

Economically, the Western Sahara War, which coincided with a period of severe drought, dealt a near-fatal blow to Mauritania's development and forced the country to increasingly depend on foreign aid, mostly from conservative Arab countries. Eventually, the inability of the Daddah regime to extricate Mauritania from both the war and its concomitant economic problems led to a bloodless military coup d'état in July 1978.

Military Rule

During the next six years after the coup d'état, the constitution was suspended, Daddah's party disintegrated, the National Assembly was dissolved, and the country was ruled by military regimes. These regimes enacted efforts to remain outside the Western Sahara conflict, but they were impeded by the continuing war between Morocco and the Polisario Front, which spilled over into Mauritania's northern regions.

Mohamed Khouna Ould Haidalla, who assumed power in May 1979, led the most durable of the military regimes during that period. It survived because Haidalla skillfully balanced the factions in his government, which included nationalists, adherents of the Western Sahara liberation cause, and proponents of close ties with Morocco. Toward the end of his regime, however, Haidalla began to arrogate authority at the expense of the other members of the ruling Military Committee for National Salvation. Some of these decisions concerned accusations of corruption and nepotism, as

well as the recognition of the Polisario's governing arm, the Sahrawi (Saharan) Arab Democratic Republic.

Taya Comes To Power

In December 1984, Haidalla was ousted by Maayouia Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya in another bloodless coup d'état. Taya's first actions as the new president were to maintain a neutral position toward the Western Sahara, and to move toward municipal elections. At first glance, Taya's measures suggested an optimistic political prognosis for Mauritania. Ethnic relations, however, were becoming more pronounced and a number of political conflicts emerged. Taya's regime dealt harshly with dissidents and grew increasingly repressive.

Among the black African population, there was a growing fear of Arabization of the country, which was exacerbated by Taya's close relations with Iraq. The Moors, for their part, expressed fears over increased radicalism among the black African populace. Finally, in 1989, a land dispute between Moors and black Africans along the Senegal River quickly escalated, and rioting ensued in both Nouakchott and Dakar (the capitals of Mauritania and Senegal respectively). Hundreds of people were killed and the two governments expelled tens of thousands of each other's citizens before breaking diplomatic relations.

Elections

Faced with internal crisis in the form of ethnic strife, as well as a cut-off of military and development assistance from abroad, Taya implemented democratic reforms in 1991, including the legalization of political parties, a free press and a referendum ratifying a new constitution. He also announced that presidential and legislative elections would follow, culminating in a transition to civil rule by 1992.

The first national elections since the military overthrow of Moktar Ould Daddah's regime in 1978 were scheduled for early 1992. By the time of the elections, 15 political parties had been recognized. Of the major opposition parties, the most significant was the Union of Democratic Forces-New Era, or UDF-NE, headed by Ahmed Ould Daddah, the half-brother of the country's first president. President Taya was the head of the Democratic and Social Republican Party, or PRDS.

Taya, however, did not step down in favor of a transitional government, and amidst charges of fraudulent voting, he was elected president in January 1992. Results showed that Taya obtained 62.7 percent of the poll, and his nearest rival, Ahmed Ould Daddah, received 32.8 percent of the votes cast. As a result, Taya remained president and Mauritania's head of state.

At his inauguration, he designated Sidi Mohamed Ould Boubacar, a technocrat, to be the prime minister and the head of government. Opposition groups claimed that the elections were marred by significant irregularities, and most international observers refused to ratify the election as free and fair.

Meanwhile, by late February 1992, six opposition parties that had initially intended to contest the National Assembly election withdrew their candidates, claiming that the electoral process favored the PRDS candidates. Similarly, other than the PRDS, only one party presented candidates for the Senate elections. This led to a general boycott by most of the opposition parties of the legislative elections.

In the final tally, the PRDS candidates won 67 of the 79 National Assembly seats, and the PRDS candidates captured 36 of the 56 Senate seats. In both houses, independent candidates, rather than those with party affiliations, held most of the minority seats. Consequently, when the National Assembly and Senate were inaugurated, the candidates from Taya's party, the PRDS, dominated both legislative chambers of the parliament. Once again the opposition contested the results.

Second Republic

On April 18, 1992, the Mauritanian Second Republic was declared, the ruling military committee was disbanded, and the civilian regime took office, despite a boycott by opposition parties in the parliament. That same month, relations were formally restored with Senegal, but the fate of tens of thousands of refugees living on the Senegalese side of the river, as well as land and property claims, remained unresolved.

PRDS Dominance

In early 1996, President Taya appointed Cheikh Afia Ould Mohamed Khouna as the new prime minister, replacing Boubacar, who was then made the secretary-general of the PRDS. A new cabinet was also formed under the Khouna government, and a few months later, another governmental shuffle took place. Also in early 1996, a general election was announced for later that year and most of the opposition parties agreed to participate in them.

In October 1996 Mauritania held its first plural legislative election. Taya's party, the PRDS, reaffirmed its authority by winning 61 of the 63 contests that were decided in the first round of voting for the National Assembly seats. Several opposition parties disputed the validity of the election results, and the Union for Democracy and Progress, or UDP, decided to boycott the second round of voting. In the second round of voting, the PRDS picked up another nine seats

ultimately winning 70 of the 79 seats in the National Assembly. The Rally for Democracy and National Unity, or RDU, a party allied with the PRDS won a seat, and the newly formed opposition party, Action for Change, or AC, won a seat as well. Independent candidates won the remaining seven seats.

The domination by the PRDS was regarded as strengthening the hand of Taya who was to face the presidential elections in early 1997. At the end of 1996, following the resignation of the cabinet, Prime Minister Khouna, announced a new Council of Ministers. Further governmental changes were made the following year.

International observers charged that the Taya did not foster the political space necessary for democratic contestation to flourish. However, in the aggregate the elections were deemed fair. The greatest challenge the opposition seemed to face came not from the PRDS but from itself. The 21 groups vying for political power could not unite, dividing the vote. Voter turnout was a stunningly low 30 percent in urban areas. This level of abstention in areas where participation is relatively easy and voter knowledge is relatively high likely indicates that there is widespread discontent with both the ruling party and the opposition choices.

Taya's Re-Election and Continued PRDS Dominance

In April 1997, a coalition of five opposition parties, spearheaded by the AC and the UDF-NE, staged a demonstration in Nouakchott to protest price increases, corruption and restrictions placed on political parties and trade unions. At a later demonstration in June 1997, Daddah of the UDF-NE announced that coalition would boycott the election as it anticipated electoral fraud. The actual presidential election held in December 1997 returned Taya to the presidency with 90.2 percent of the popular vote.

In April 1998, the Senate elections were held for a third of the 56 Senate seats, upon the expiry of the members' term of office. Altogether, 25 seats were in competition. These included 18 seats that were occupied by members of the ruling party, PRDS. With many opposition parties again boycotting the election, PRDS candidates emerged as the overwhelming victors. In the final tally, the distribution of the 56 seats in the Senate was as follows: 54 PRDS members, one RDNU member, and one AC member. Following the Senate election of April 7 and 14, 2000, the PRDS held 52 seats, non-partisans held one seat and Representatives of Mauritanians Abroad held three seats.

Opposition Factions and Party Divisions

In December 1998, Ahmed Ould Daddah of the Union of Democratic Forces, or UDF, and two of

his party members, Mohameden Ould Baba and Mohameden Ould Icheddou, were arrested for "tarnishing the country's image." They claimed that Mauritania would be accepting Israeli nuclear waste and calling for an independent international commission to investigate. Daddah also accused the Taya family of embezzling nearly $2 billion in foreign aid money since 1985. The arrest of the UDF leaders brought protests from civilians and a call for their release by the opposition party, the "Forces de liberation africaines de Mauritania" (FLAM). UDF members clashed with national security forces in Nouadhibou in January and reiterated the call for an independent inquiry into the nuclear waste disposal. Baba and Daddah went on trial in March and were acquitted of the charges.

Since 1999, party divisions along ethnic and racial lines deepened. President Taya, already holder of a strong presidency, attempted to consolidate his power further. Regular confrontations erupted as opposition parties assembled, even as the government denied them that right. The government cited acts of violence in previous meetings as an excuse for not granting assembly permits, and the opposition claimed that violence would not be necessary if they would only be given their constitutional right to assembly. In April 2000, Ahmed Ould Daddah, leader of the UFD-EN was arrested for defying a ban on public gatherings.

Daddah was expected to publicly challenge the acquisition of wealth by President Taya and his associates the following day. He was released five days later and the issue of corruption was not raised. Two weeks later, in May, the UFD-EN held a sit in to press for an independent electoral commission and for equal access to the state run media. In June 2000, the contest between the government and the UFD-EN significantly increased as the UFD-EN publicly denounced the use of tear gas by security forces at an otherwise peaceful political rally. Ahmed Ould Daddah, is brother of the late founding president of Mauritania, Moktar Daddah. This connection led some observers to speculate that the confrontations are as much fights between houses as they are issues of political freedom.

Inter-party relations deteriorated further on Oct. 29, 2000, when President Taya banned Daddah's UDF Party, evicting it from its headquarters and confiscating all its property. According to articles 4, 25 and 26 of the ban, the action was taken against the UDF for harming the reputation and interests of the country, inciting intolerance and violence, and inciting demonstrations in order to disturb order and public peace and security. Daddah responded by calling the ban an "illegal and anti-constitutional...smear campaign against the country." He then asserted that the ban is a call for violence. In December 2000, Daddah was arrested upon his return from Paris. He had traveled on an invitation from President Jacques Chirac, but the Taya government asserted that he was arrested for meeting with French "terrorists."

2001 Elections

On Oct. 19 and 26, 2001, there were new elections for the National Assembly. Competing were 12 parties and eight coalitions presenting 164 lists. The PRDS won 51 percent of the assembly vote, securing 64 of the 81 seats. The opposition was splintered: the Rally for Democracy and Unity, or RDU, won three seats, the Union for Democracy and Progress, or UDP, won three seats, the Rally of Democratic Forces, or RFD, won three seats, the Action for Change, or AC, won four seats, the Union of Progress Forces, or UFP, won three seats, and the Popular Front, or FP, won one seat. As a result of his simple majority, President Taya immediately stated that he would not seek a unity government.

While there remained insufficient political space for virulent competition to the ruling party to emerge, the elections were seen as free and there were no reported incidents of violence. The opposition did not contest the elections. The European Union commended Mauritania's elections stating "the results of the elections reflect the political pluralism shown by the Mauritanian electorate." Similar support came from France.

Following the constitutional mandate, Prime Minister Cheikh el Avia Ould Mohamed Khouna tenured his resignation on Nov. 4, 2001. The president immediately re-appointed him and Ould Mohamed Khouna appointed a new cabinet on Nov. 5, 2001.

Political Freedom; Human and Civil Rights

Even with his renewed mandate, President Taya had to confront Mauritania's continued political challenges as well as its myriad of social, economic, and religious challenges. For example, there was an ongoing concern regarding Mauritania's observance of civil rights.

Earlier, in 1994, authorities enforced strict press controls and suspended journals that were deemed to be critical of Taya's administration. In addition, more than 90 alleged members of Islamic fundamentalist organizations were arrested, and political speeches in places of worship were prohibited. In January of 2002, the government ordered the dissolution of the opposition party, Action for Change. The party's political platform was one of increased rights for blacks and the descendents of slaves in a country where political power has been assymetrically held by Arabs and Berbers. Action for Change was deemed to be a 'radical,' racist and violent movement by the government. This was the third party to be banned in Mauritania in recent years; the Union of Democratic Forces and the Attalia party were both banned in 2000 and 1999 respectively.

Meanwhile, Mauritania's human rights record continued to be open to significant criticism. The press has been still the sole domain of the ruling party, the freedom to disagree with the government has been lacking, and the activities of human rights groups have been curtailed. Political killings, disappearances and torture have occasionally taken place. Prisoners have been held without charge, parties have been banned on ideological grounds, and police have forcibly

dispersed student protests.

Civil rights in Mauritania also have continued to decline. Freedom House, a U.S.-based non-government organization, recently reflected on this lack of freedom by giving Mauritania an overall ranking of "not free." Amnesty International contextualized the lack of freedoms in Mauritania by citing the regularized arrest and imprisonment of opposition leaders, severe limitations on press freedoms and the activities of human rights groups, political killings, disappearances, torture and expulsion. It also cited severe reactions by security forces against peaceful assembly. Most of the abuses have been committed by Moures dominating the political sphere against Mauritanian blacks, commonly from the Senegal River Valley.

While slavery is illegal in Mauritania, the government has continued to ban the United Nations(U.N.)-backed Mauritanian chapter of "SOS racisme." Its leader, Mohamed Ould Maloum, was detained in December 1998, although the government denied these claims. Another member of "SOS racisme" told the U.N.'s IRIN Humanitarian Unit (Reliefweb) that Maloum's passport was taken and he was detained after calling for the arrest of President Taya for crimes against humanity.

The Mauritanian Commission on Human Rights, the Fight Against Poverty and Social Inclusion was created on July 2, 1998, by a decree issued by the prime minister. It specified not only the inclusion of civil rights, but economic and social rights as well as social integration. The latter mandate was meant to address the issue of slavery prominent in the country (see People section of this review for more information on this subject). While Human Rights Watch and other human rights non-government organizations have praised the creation of the commission, in practice it appears to have done little as of yet to rectify many of the human rights problems. Further, Human Rights Watch argues "the government continues to constrain and harass the political opposition and human rights NGO community, including through the denial of official registration."

Impact of the Economy on the Political Sphere

Currency fluctuations have plagued Mauritania since 1992 when there was a significant currency depreciation. With the prices of commodities on the increase in this impoverished country, there was sharp public protest.

In early 1995, a 25 percent increase in the price of bread led to riots in the capital city, Nouakchott. Several prominent opposition leaders were arrested for their alleged involvement in organizing the disturbances, a curfew was imposed, and public gatherings were temporarily banned. While in recent years the currency stabilized, commodities have been more consistent. Food prices are protected against violent price swings through an emergency subsidy program introduced by the government. However, with such poor infrastructure and limited economic capacity, Mauritania's

economy remains highly vulnerable to internal (political) and external (draught, border violence, etc.) shocks.

In June 2002, Mauritania had over one billion dollars (USD) in debt relief granted thanks to a newly-established program intended to assist the world's most impoverished and debt-ridden countries. After satisfying the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank that it had successfully achieved poverty reduction to just under 50 percent of the population, Mauritania was also able to show it had developed its economy by close to five percent in 2001.

By demonstrating these reforms and presenting a strategy to deal with its economic woes, Mauritanian was eligible to receive the debt relief. Mauritania was also able to assert that it had made pharmaceuticals and contraceptives more available to the population, and a community education on AIDS awareness had been launched. These developments could potentially bode well for the country's socio-economic situation in the future. The political future, however, promised to be a more complicated scenario.

Islam

To date, politics in Mauritania have been heavily influenced by personalities, with any leader's ability to exercise political power dependent upon control over resources, perceived ability or integrity, caste, tribal, ethnic, family and personal considerations. Although very powerful, leaders, such as the president, have been subject to caste and ethnic pressures. Political parties still reflect the country's social division. Many of the country's non-Moorish black citizens support opposition parties, while others are active in liberation movements that are technically illegal. In addition, unauthorized radical Islamic groups have gained influence; this trend will likely continue.

The divide between Muslims seeking a secular state and radical Islamic forces within the population has grown wider over the past few years. A cardinal event in the escalation came with the establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel in October 1999. Largely viewed by the international community as a bid to strengthen United States (U.S.) ties and increase U.S. aid, to the contrary, Iraq responded by increasing support for agents of the Iraqi Baath Party in Mauritania, particularly members of the Vanguard Party. According to Mauritanian radio, Saddam Hussein specifically ordered his Mauritanian Islamic loyalists to carry out acts of sabotage and foment riots within the country. Mauritania recalled its ambassador from Baghdad.

Following the new Palestinian Intifada in September 2000, the government of Mauritania came under significant pressure from the Arab League to sever its ties with Israel. Student and opposition demonstrations led to regular conflicts with security officers in the streets of Nouakchott in late 2000 and early 2001. President Taya, however, remained steadfast in his willingness to promote Mauritanian-Israeli relations. On March 12-13, 2001, Alon Liel, director general of Israel's Foreign

Ministry, met with Mauritanian officials in Nouakchott on political business.

The Sept. 11, 2001, attacks against the United States created further challenges to the secular state in this nearly 100 percent Muslim country. Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaida network has been known to have cells in the country, and even before these attacks, it was believed that financial support for bin Laden came from Islamic groups in Mauritania. On Nov. 5, 2001, bin Laden specifically named Mauritania as a place where faithfuls have supported the cause against the "infidels." While moderate Islamic leaders have maintained that jihad is not the answer, in November 2001 leading moderate cleric and politician, Jemil Ould Mansour, stated that bin Laden acted in a "reaction" and that the United States and its allies have "pushed people into illegal and violent reactions."

The looming crisis has been that the government of Mauritania is an American ally. Not one week before bin Laden praised supporters in the Mauritanian population, the United States stated it was satisfied with Mauritania's collaboration in the fight against terrorism. Indeed, the United States made an arrest related to the attacks in Mauritania.

The challenge presented to President Taya involved offering support to the United States efforts, and maintaining ties with Israel, without marginalizing the Muslim population from the policy. To do that, Jemil Ould Mansour had argued that Taya would have to accept the notion that democratic politics is not secular politics. On the contrary, Islamic groups had to be given room in a democracy to flourish along side all other groups, and they had to be given a fair opportunity to win elections, if such an end was dictated by the popular will. This was not, however, a position to which President Taya appeared to be pre-disposed to support.

The Islam debacle dovetailed with increasingly venomous party politics. In particular, the conflict between the UDF and the government was heightened with the establishment of Mauritanian-Israeli relations. Daddah, for example, has viewed Mauritanian relations with Israel as a violation of Arab trust. UDF supporters have, therefore, demonstrated fervently for the expulsion of all Jews and supporters of Israel from the country. As a result, anti-government graffiti became a common form of expression, while there were cases recorded about detainment for those who dared to express political dissent in through street art. This increased Islamic-secular divide in the country would invariably find its way into the political sphere in the years to come as enmity between the political establishment and the Islamic factions increased.

Elections of 2003 and 2004

Despite the increasingly tense political climate, Maaouiya Ould Taya was apparently re-elected following the first round of the presidential election in 2003. Garnering 67 percent of the votes cast, Taya won a convincing victory; however, opposition candidates alleged mass fraud and called for a new election.

Taya's main rival, Mohamad Khouna Ould Haidallah, Mauritania's former leader, won approximately 19 percent of the votes cast. Before the election, he had been detained on the grounds that he had been planning a coup d'etat (this issue is discussed below). Although Haidallah was provisionally released before the election took place, shortly after the announcement of the election's outcome, he was re-arrested. In April 2004, Haidallah was given a five-year suspended sentence effectively barring him from any political activity.

By-elections for 17 seats in the parliament were held in April 2004. The ruling Democratic and Social Republican Party (PRDS) won 14 seats; the Popular Progressive Alliance won two; and the Rally for Unity and Democracy won one seat.

Attempts to Oust Taya

Meanwhile, in June 2003, there was an attempted coup d'etat in Muritania's capital of Nouakchott by rebel soldiers from the country's military. Troops loyal to President Taya regained control of the city after intense armed conflict with the rebel soldiers. It was the most violent attempt to oust the leadership since independence in 1960.

The reason behind the attempted coup d'etat was unknown, however, it was reported that the alleged coup d'etat leader, Sala Ould Hananna, had been sacked from the army after expressing his criticisms in regard to the country's bilateral ties with Israel. Another theory suggested that Hananna had cultivated close connections with Ba'athists and Saddam Hussein sympathisers in Nouakchott and as such, the coup d'etat attempt might have been spurred by sympathy for Iraq. Adding to the possible rationales for the attempted coup d'etat was the fact that it came after 32 Islamists were arrested for allegedly threatening national security.

In both August and September 2004, the government announced it had foiled two more attempted military coup d'etats. In the first incident, 20 soldiers were arrested for allegedly plotting to overthrow President Taya. In September, another plan was uncovered and former army officer Saleh Ould Hanena was arrested on charges of leading both attempts to oust the leadership from power. The government also claimed that caches of weapons were discovered and confiscated. President Taya implicated the governments of Burkina Faso and Libya, alleging they had provided financial and material support. Both countries denied the allegations.

By the first part of 2005, close to 200 people, including former President Mohamed Khouna Ould Haidallah (mentioned above), were placed on trial for allegedly plotting the series of attempted coup d'etats. Four soldiers were sentenced to life imprisonment after being found guilty of plotting to overthrow the government in February 2005

Economic Assistance

On June 11, 2005, at a pre-G8 summit meeting in London, world leaders agreed to write off $40 billion in debt owed by the world's poorest countries. Under the plan, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the African Development Fund would write off 100 percent of the money owed to them by 18 countries. In about a year to 18 months, another nine countries would also benefit from debt relief. Then, eleven other countries would be eligible for such relief, provided that they successfully dealt with corruption and met targets for good governance. With those additional two phases, the entire plan would involve $55 billion in debt relief.

The countries benefiting immediately from the plan expressed gratitude that they would no longer be saddled with debilitating debt and that they could, instead, work toward economic development. Anti-poverty activists also expressed support for the plan but said that more countries should also be able to benefit.

With the plan for debt relief agreed upon, British Prime Minister Tony Blair traveled to Moscow on June 12, 2005, for another meeting in a series of pre-G8 summit talks with world leaders. On the agenda were matters such as African aid and development, as well as transnational measures to deal with climate change. The United Kingdom, which holds the presidency of the G8 grouping of the world's eight wealthiest countries, was hoping to advance a significant increase in developmental aid to help benefit the world's most impoverished countries, especially in Africa.

Mauritania was one of twenty-seven countries, which were eligible for debt relief under the HIPC (highly-indebted poor countries initiative). Such aid was crucial to Mauritania, which, along with neighboring countries, was suffering in 2005 from a famine caused by plagues of locusts and regional drought.

Developments in 2005

Amidst the news of African aid, Mauritania experienced some political shockwaves. The first was an incident of political unrest with geopolitical connections. The second transformed the entire political landscape in Mauritania.

First, in June 2005, an attack on an army base in the Sahara left 15 soldiers dead. According to government sources, the incident was attributed to insurgents from Algeria.

Then, on Aug. 4, 2005, armed forces surrounded Mauritania's state radio and television buildings, as well as the presidential palace. Broadcasts by the state-run media were cut off and the airport was closed. Reports of arrests of senior military officials were followed by an announcement that

Mauritania's leadership had been overthrown. The army officers who made the announcement said that the "totalitarian regime" of Maaouiya Ould Sid Ahmed Taya had been ended and that the Military Council for Justice and Democracy had been formed for the purpose of ruling Mauritania. Security chief, Colonel Ely Ould Mohammed Vall, was identified as leader of the apparent coup d'etat.

Taya Ousted from Power

Taya had been out of the country attending the funeral of Saudi Arabia's King Fahd at the time of the coup d'etat. He was later flown to Niamey, the capital city of Niger, where he was met by President Mamadou Tandja of that country. He was expected to remain in Niger at least until permanent exile could be arranged. (Note: Exile was eventually arranged for Taya in Qatar.)

Several days after the apparent coup d'etat, the new military council, led by Col. Vall, said that it intended to administer control over the country for a transitional period of two years, after which it would oversee free and fair elections. The military council also suggested that it only intended to hold on to power for the duration of the transitional period. It also stated that none of its members would stand for office when elections were held in two years.

The news was met with jubilation among the Mauritanian population. Reports on the ground stated that there were mass celebrations in the streets of the capital city of Nouakchott. Conversely, the decision to appoint veteran politician, Sidy Mohamed Ould Boubacar, as the new prime minister and head of government was not met with enthusiasm, presumably because of his ties to the ousted regime. In fact, the announcement of the new interim leader evoked anger among many, including the political parties, which had been supportive of Taya's overthrow from office.

Nevertheless, the junta took satisfaction in the public support for its decision to begin releasing political prisoners. Indeed, crowds cheered the release of 21 men who had been accused of Islamic extremism under the aegis of Taya's regime. Analysts suggested that the underlying reason for the support for Taya's overthrow could well be connected with issues surrounding religious identity and foreign policy (discussed in more detail below). For example, the decision by Taya to establish diplomatic ties between the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and Israel had been a deeply controversial one. Mauritania was one of only three members of the Arab League to establish diplomatic ties with the Jewish state, which at home was regarded as a highly unpopular policy. Another unpopular move by Taya's regime was the permission for American special forces to operate in Mauritania. Both measures were believed to have spurred political enmity between the country's leadership and its Islamic factions, ultimately resulting in this shift in governance.

At the broader level, the ousting of Taya's regime was met with widespread international condemnation. The African Union said it "strongly condemns any seizure of power or any attempt

to take power by force." United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan expressed deep concern regarding the news from Mauritania and reprovingly noted that political disagreements should be settled "peacefully and democratically." Possible shifts of foreign policy by the new leadership of Mauritania were anticipated and were also likely to evoke feedback from the wider international community.

Observations

President Taya had made great strides in successfully transforming Mauritania from a military state to an electoral democracy. But there was still much work left to be done. Elections, while had been established as part of the political process, were dominated by Taya's ruling party and political freedoms were far from encompassing. As in any case where a former military leader is elected as part of a political transition, democratic consolidation can only be assessed after a regime change. Further, economic crisis continued to challenge the administration. As well, social customs, such as slavery along race lines, continued to be a significant challenge. Perhaps most critically, Mauritania was yet to confront how it, as an Islamic country, would address the increasingly politically-charged relationship between Islam and democracy and the cleavages it has created. Notably, political dissonance was on the increase between the political establishment and Islamic factions searching for more power and influence.

Not surprisingly, the climate of political enmity between the ruling regime and the Islamic factions resulted in previous attempts (discussed above) to topple Taya, and ultimately his being ousted from power in 2005. While the precise reasons for the sustained efforts to topple Taya remain unknown, as discussed throughout, the possible rationales being espoused have typically pointed to geopolitical issues and foreign policy imbued with cultural, ideological and religious considerations. In a global context in which identity politics bear great influence, Mauritania will continue to grapple with these matters in the years to come.

 The coup d'etat, led by Colonel Ely Ould Mohamed Vall, moved Mauritania more forcefully toward democracy than ever before. The ousting of Taya resulted in the installation of an interim government, changes to the constitution including term limits of two years for presidents, as well as an improved human rights situation, and the more comprehensive institution of democracy.

Democratic Elections in 2006

Voters went to the polls in mid-2006 to vote in a referendum aimed at limiting presidential power. In that referendum, citizens voted overwhelmingly in favor of limiting presidential tenure to two terms in office.

November 2006 in Mauritania was marked by historic elections -- indeed, the first since the bloodless coup of 2005 that ended the 20-year long authoritarian regime of Maaouiya Ould Sid Ahmed Taya.   The elections made clear that the transitional military regime had kept its promise to return the country to civilian governance in short order.

Observers, including those from the European Union, said that the elections had taken place peacefully and in a smooth manner, with no reports of irregularities. They also reported that turnout was high. Meanwhile, analysts noted that voting likely ensued along ethnic lines. Mauritania's complex ethnic makeup ranges from black African sub-Saharans to Arabs (known as Moors or Maures), and includes people of mixed African and Arab lineage. Mauritania is a country where power has traditionally been linked with ethnicity. Indeed, there has been a high degree of friction between the Moors who, as the descendants of conquering forces, have tended to dominate the political, economic and cultural spectrum, and black Africans, who have often been discriminated against because of structural barriers.

Close to 30 political parties were contesting the elections, which would decide the membership of the lower chamber of parliament, known as the National Assembly. Absent from the list of entities contesting the election were banned Islamist parties and movements. Nevertheless, many Islamists were contesting the elections anyway as independent candidates.

With the votes counted, it appeared that opposition parties had won the largest number of seats in parliament. Of particular note was the fact that Rally of Democratic Forces (RFD), led by veteran opposition leader Ahmed Ould Daddah, appeared to have had a respectable performance. That said, the complete election outcome -- as well as the actual nature of parliament -- remained undecided since more than half the seats at stake were to go to a second round of voting. In those cases, candidates failed to secure the requisite 50 percent of the vote share for outright victory, thus spurring the need for run-off elections. The second round of elections was scheduled for December 3, 2006.

In the aftermath of the second round of parliamentary elections, held on December 3, 2006, no party was shown to have won an outright majority. Independents belonging to the former ruling party held 39 seats, while a coalition of parties (the Coalition of Forces for Democratic Change) opposed to the ousted president took 41 of the 95 seats at stake. Within that coalition, the Rally of Forces for Democracy (RFD), led by veteran opposition leader Ahmed Ould Daddah, emerged as the single largest party represented in parliament.

Presidential Election of 2007

At the start of 2007, allies of Mauritania's ousted leader, Maaouiya Ould Sid Ahmed Taya, issued their joint support for presidential candidate, Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi, in presidential elections

scheduled for March 2007. He was regarded as an independent of sorts. Because there was no real favorite in the race, especially since the military leaders who orchestrated the coup of 2005 were not standing for election, Abdallahi was regarded as being, at least, a competitive candidate contesting the poll.

In February 2007, three political parties -- the Popular Front, the Democratic Revival, and the Assembly for Mauritania -- formed a coalition called El-Watan. The coalition, which espoused a platform of national unity, put forth their support for former President Mohamed Khouna Oul Haidallah as their candidate of choice in the upcoming presidential election. Meanwhile, the former opposition was expected to field as many as four candidates.

There were ultimately 19 contenders in the presidential election. These contenders included previous government officials, such as former Central Bank Governor Zeine Ould Zeidane, as well as a consensus candidate, Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdellahi, who was put forth by supporters of the previous ousted regime as noted above. Another key contender was Ahmed Ould Daddah -- the half-brother of the country's first post-independence leader. Still, there was not one candidate who was favored to win. Also complicating the prediction models for who might ultimately claim victory was the fact that there were no military or "coup-related" candidates contesting the election. As such, there was some expectation that a second "run-off" round would have to take place before a winner could be officially named.

Voters finally went to the polls in March 2007 to vote for a new president in Mauritania. Long lines at polling stations were reported and the election appeared to have gone off in a free and fair manner.

The expectation about a second election round came to pass when it was announced that the two largest vote-getters -- Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdellahi and Ahmed Ould Daddah -- would contest a second round of the election, scheduled for March 25, 2007. That announcement was quickly followed by declarations of support to the two second-round candidates from defeated contenders -- all of whom appeared to be jockeying for positions in the forthcoming political regime. Of particular significance was the fact that Zeine Ould Zeidane, who garnered a third place finish with 15 percent of the vote share, decided to back Abdellahi. Analysts agreed that if Zeidane's supporters intended to follow his lead, then Abdellahi could well go into the second round with some degree of an advantage.

On March 25, 2007, voters went to the polls once again to cast their ballots in the second round. The election was deemed to free and fair. With the votes counted, it was reported that Abdellahi had won the run-off election with 53 percent of the vote share while Daddah took 40 percent. Abdellahi had been backed by a number of the defeated contenders from the first round, as well a coalition of groups allied with the ousted Taya regime. He also enjoyed support from an anti-slavery activist -- an important issue in a country where this has been an ongoing concern. As

well, Abdellahi was regarded as the preferred option by the military leadership of the outgoing interim government, which did not participate in the election. Interior Minister Mohamed Ahmed Ould Mohamed Lemine made Abdellahi's victory official saying, "I hereby proclaim that the next president of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania will be Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi."

The presidential contest, as well as the parliamentary races that were held in late 2006, were regarded as landmark elections in a country that experienced a military coup d'etat in 2005. Since transitions of power in Mauritania have never before taken place through the process of voting, the country was effectively entering the realm of democracy for the first time since independence from France.

Key Developments of 2008 (before the 2008 coup; see "Special Report" below)

On July 3, 2008, the Mauritanian government resigned after 39 opposition parliamentarians filed a non-confidence motion against it. Prime Minister Yahya Ould Ahmed Waghf reportedly submitted the resignation of his government. President Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi accepted the mass resignation but he noted that opposition parliamentarians had criticized the government of Prime Minister Yahya Ould Ahmed Waghf, which had only been in power for two months, before it was able to present its policy agenda. He also expressed cynicism about the true motives of the opposition lawmakers who had filed the non-confidence motion.

By mid-July 2008, a new cabinet, composed of 30 members, including 13 new members from the majority party, was announced. The new cabinet is listed in the section titled "Principal Government Officials."

Special Report:

Military coup overthrows Mauritania's first democratically elected government in 20 years

On Aug. 6, 2008, a military coup overthrew Mauritania's first democratically elected government in 20 years. The coup d'etat was led by a military chief -- General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz -- who was himself a key orchestrator of the previous coup in 2005, which drove the unpopular dictator, Maaouya Sid'Ahmed Ould Taya, from power.

The firing of four of Mauritania's top four military officials and the appointment of a new army chief of staff to replace General Aziz appeared to have sparked this action. Also at issue was the government's overtures toward Islamic hardliners, which was not favorably viewed by the military leaders and led to friction with democratically-elected President Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi. The political dissonance was also not helped by the claim that the politicians alleged to be corrupt were

included in the government.

Reports from the capital of Nouakcott suggested that President Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi was being held by the renegade soldiers, Prime Minister Yahya Ould Ahmed Waqef and other officials had been detained, and that the new "state council" was in charge of the country. The coup leader, General Aziz, said that the country's democratic institutions would endure. However, he declined to specify if fresh elections would be set or if the democratically-elected president would be released. In an interview with a London newspaper, the coup leader said, "We will not release the deposed president at the time being for security reasons. We are now trying to make calm prevail." While the deposed president remained under detention, the prime minister and other government officials were subsequently released.

Note: Aziz and his co-conspirator took Abdallahi into custody while his wife and children were detained in the presidential palace. Abdallahi was later placed under house arrest in his village of Lemden.

Within days, the main opposition party in Mauritania, Rally of Democratic Forces (RFD), demanded a return to constitutional rule. The RFD released a statement urging the rapid restoration of constitutional order as a means of "preventing the situation from getting out of control." The RFD also noted that the "hopes of the Mauritanian people were undermined by mismanagement and negligence (by the authorities)."

The Africa Union (AU) condemned the coup d'etat and demanded the return to constitutional order and legality. Soon thereafter, the AU warned it was ready to suspend Mauritania from its ranks. The suspension was expected to last until the restoration of constitutional government. Tanzania's Foreign Minister Bernard Membe, who was also the AU's president, said: "The coup is a serious setback for Mauritanians because it has robbed the people of their basic right to freely elect leaders of their own choice." As well, both France and the United States announced they would suspend humanitarian aid to Mauritania.

In December 2008, months after the military coup, which resulted in the overthrow of Mauritania's first democratically elected government in 20 years, the deposed Mauritanian leader, President Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi, was released from house arrest.

Mauritania's military authorities authorized the unconditional release of President Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi, in line with their commitment to do so during meetings with an international delegation to the country earlier in December 2008. Indeed, the move indicated that the military junta had been influence by the wave of international condemnation and associated threats of sanctions, which have been levied since the coup. The military junta also announced plans for a national dialogue aimed at determining a transition program and mechanisms for a fresh presidential election in 2009.

For his part, Cheikh Ould Abdallahi, said he would not participate in the proposed national dialogue, postulating that it would be akin to legitimizing the coup. He did, however, indicate a desire to recapture his position as president.

Participants at the National Dialogue, which ended in early 2009, recommended that a presidential election be held on May 30, 2009, which would return the country to civilian rule. There was some minor conflict with that date and the June 6, 2009 date announced by the military junta for presidential elections. Regardless, it was clear that the presidential contest would take place in that approximate time period.

Mauritanian military leader, Gen. Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, said at the closing ceremony of the National Dialogue that the ruling High Council of State would strictly implement all the decisions of the forum. He also acknowledged the boycott by an alliance of 13 political parties known as the National Front for the Defence of Democracy (FNDD), saying, "The door remains open for the participation of all in order to determine the future of Mauritania." This statement appeared to refer, in part, to calls by ousted president Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi asking the military to give up power and return to their posts in the barracks.

By April 2009, news from Mauritania suggested that presidential elections, now scheduled for June 6, 2009, could be postponed further. At issue was the view that a delay would allow mediators more time to forge a sustainable resolution to the political crisis gripping the country. As before, the National Front for the Defense and Democracy (FNDD) has characterized the election as an effort by the coup leader, General Aziz, to succeed himself. The FNDD has insisted that meaningful dialogue aimed at finding a solution to the political crisis would not be possible without full participation from interest groups.

By the end of May 2009, Mauritanian politicians agreed to postpone the disputed presidential elections to July 18, 2009, with a second round -- if necessary -- in August 2009. The new election schedule came following negotiations in the Senegalese capital of Dakar, mediated by Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade, and involving the military junta, the National Front of the Defense of Democracy(FNDD) and the Assembly of Democratic Forces (RFD). It marked a breakthrough in the political crisis that has gripped the country since the military coup in which General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz siezed power from President Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi.

Meanwhile, in February 2009, the government issued a decree setting Senate elections for May 2009. However, a month before those elections were to take place, the government issued another decree postponing the elections without setting new dates. The postponement was attributed to the delayed presidential elections.

Primer on Elections of 2009

On July 18, 2009, a total of 10 candidates were set to contest Mauritanian presidential election. The list of candidates for the presidency was made public by the constitutional court and included the following contenders:

Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, ex-leader of the military junta that ousted President Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdalahi in 2008, Sarr Ibrahima Moctar, Sghair Ould M'Bareck and Kane Hamidou Baba, Ahmed Ould Daddah, leader of the Rally of Democratic Forces (RDF), Mohamed Jemil Ould Mansour, Messaoud Ould Boulkheir, Ely Ould Mohamed Vall, former head of state, Hamada Ould Meimou and Saleh Ould Hanena.

The presidential election was made possible under the aegis of the Dakar Framework Agreement, which called for an inclusive return to constitutional legality. That agreement was signed on June 2, 2009 in the Senegalese capital, Dakar, and was intended to end the political and institutional crisis triggered by the coup. But there were fears that the elections would present a farcical attempt to return the country to constitutional order, with the outcome -- victory for Abdelaziz -- the only expected result.

Indeed, following the election, with the votes seemingly counted, election officials gave a victory to Abdelaziz with 52 percent of the vote share. The main challengers contesting the election denounced Mauritania's presidential election as a "charade" with a "prefabricated" result. One presidential contender, Messaoud Ould Boulkheir, addressed a press conference saying, "The results which are starting to come out show that it is an electoral charade which is trying to legitimize the coup." Meanwhile, a statement from a group of four presidential candidates read: "Firstly we firmly reject these prefabricated results, secondly we call on the international community to put in place an inquiry to shed some light on the electoral process."

Nevertheless, days later, the Mauritanian Interior Ministry said that Abdelaziz had won the presidential election with 52.58 percent of the votes, surpassing the 50 percent threshold to win the presidency. In second place was Ahmed Ould Daddah who garnered 13.66 percent of the votes.

Following the inauguration of Mauritanian President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz in the second week of August 2009, Mauritanian Prime Minister Moulaye Ould Mohamed Laghdaf resigned from office, effectively paving the way for the new president to form a government. As expected, Ould Mohammed Laghdaf was re-appointed as prime minister when the president formed that new government.

Terrorism in Mauritania

In August 2009, a suicide bombing ensued at the French embassy in the capital city of Nouakchott;

the notorious terrorism enclave, al-Qaida in North Africa, claimed responsibility. Months later in December 2009, al-Qaida claimed responsibility, first, for the abduction of two Spanish aid workers, and second, for the kidnapping of two Italians. The situation spurred Mauritania to join forces in April 2010 with other countries in North Africa - Mali, Nigeria and Algeria -- to create a joint command, aimed with tackling the threat of terrorism from al-Qaida in the region. On the heels of that move, mid-2010 saw Mauritania adopt new anti-terrorism legislation aimed at tackling al-Qaida; the law offered security forces greater powers to deal with suspected terrorists. By August 2010, the two aforementioned Spanish aid workers kidnapped by al-Qaida were released in Mali. A month later in September 2010, the Mauritanian military carried out strikes against suspected al-Qaeda militants in Mali. The strokes ensued after authorities tracked militants believed to have abducted several foreign nationals in Niger cross into Mali's territory.

In February 2011, an apparent plot by suspected members of the al-Qaida North African faction was thwarted in Mauritania when soldiers opened fired on a car packed with explosives outside the capital of Nouakchott. Military forces had been tracking the convoy of three cars as they traveled from Mali and made their way to Mauritania. The shooting resulted in injuries to seven soldiers and the deaths of three suspects, who were believed to have been en route to carrying out an attack in Noakchott. A fourth suspect was taken in custody, while a fifth suspect traveling in the convoy were being sought. In an interview with the Associated Press, Colonel Mohamed Ould Ahmed, said: "The car was transporting three terrorists trying to infiltrate the capital by launching a kamikaze attack."

The al-Qaida North African faction is known as Islamic Mahgreb (AQIM) and emerged in 2007 from the Algerian militant group, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC). The reconstituted AQIM quickly allied itself with Osama Bin Laden's notorious terror enclave, spurring several Saharan countries -- Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Algeria -- to establish a joint military effort centered in Algeria, and tasked with fighting the terror threat from AQIM. The group has been blamed for a series of ambushes, kidnappings, and terror attacks in Algeria in recent times, but has become more active across the northern part of Africa and into the Sahara.

Update (2011-2012):

In 2011, as the Arab world was rocked by the so-called "Arab Spring," protests ensued also in Mauritania.

In the first week of April 2012, thousands of people took to the streets in Mauritania to attend anti-government demonstrations in the capital city of Nouakchott. Rallies, some of which were organized by opposition groups, railed against the anti-democratic practices of the government, and demanded that President Mohamed Ould Abdelaziz resign from office. For his part, Abdelaziz seized power in a coup d'etat in 2008, after he deposed the democratically elected government of

Mauritania.

One umbrella entity representing nine different protest groups issued a joint statement calling for the president to resign. The statement read as follows: "We demand that he [President Abdelaziz] leave Mauritanians free to choose their own leaders at this difficult moment and reject all other alternatives." The statement also accused the president of rigging the 2009 election that confirmed his presidential power, and condemned him for refusing to engage in serious national dialogue with opposition groups.

While this spate of protests in April 2012 appeared to have dispersed, the country has been rocked by protests in recent times. In the last week of February 2012, student protests rocked the Institute for Higher Islamic Studies and Research (ISERI) in Nouakchott -- the capital city of Mauritania. The students were registering their outrage over the government's closure of some of the university's faculties. In response, anti-riot police stormed the university campus and arrested a number of students. But the scene later turned violent as riot police clashed with students, who were demanding the release of fellow students now in police detention.

Primer on 2013 Parliamentary Elections:

Parliamentary elections in Mauritania were set to be held in the rough November - December 2013 period. In Mauritania, the bicameral parliament (barlamane) consists of the Senate or Majlis al-Shuyukh (56 seats) and the National Assembly or Majlis al-Watani (146 seats). At stake in these elections in 2013 would be the seats in the National Assembly. The previous elections were held in 2006, with the following elections expected to be held in 2011. Those 2011 elections were rescheduled for 2012 and then postponed indefinitely. There were high hopes that the elections would finally go forward in 2013. To that end, a first round of voting was set for Nov. 23, 2014, and a second round was set for Dec. 7, 2013 although a later date of Dec. 21, 2013 was eventually advanced.

Note that on Nov. 23, 2013, voters in Mauritania went to polling stations across the country to vote in the first round of the parliamentary elections. At the time of writing, turnout was reported to be 60 percent and no final results were available. Still, the ruling Union for the Republic (UPR) appeared to have enjoyed a strong performance. Unofficial results indicated that the UPR secured the plurality out of the 121 seats in the first round; the remaining seats would be decided in the second round. Other major parties contesting the elections included the Islamist Tewassoul party, El Wiam, the People's Progressive Alliance, Union for Democracy and Progress, and a party linked with the Muslim Brotherhood.

On Dec. 21, 2013, voters returned to the polls to complete the voting process in the elections in Mauritania by voting in the second round. As expected, the ruling Union for the Republic (UPR)

claimed victory. According to the country's Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), with the combined number of seats won in the two election rounds, the UPR secured 75 seats in total -- a clear majority in the parliament. The Islamists took a total of 16 seats, thus establishing them as the main opposition party in parliament. The El Wiam party won ten seats, while the People's Progressive Alliance took seven seats, Union for Democracy and Progress took six seats, and the party linked with the Muslim Brotherhood won four seats. The rest of the seats went to various other parties and political blocs.

Primer on 2014 Presidential Election:

A presidential election was set to be held in Mauritania on June 21, 2104. If no candidate secures more than 50 percent on that day, the two top performers would face off in a runoff election to be held on July 5, 2014.

Background --

On Aug. 4, 2005, a coup d'etat by the Military Council for Justice and Democracy ousted the regime of Maaouiya Ould Sid Ahmed Taya from power. Security Chief Colonel Ely Ould Mohammed Vall was identified as leader of the apparent coup d'etat. Taya had been out of the country at the time and was expected to remain in Niger at least until permanent exile could be arranged. Several days after the apparent coup d'etat, the new military council said it intended to administer control over the country for a transitional period of two years, after which it would oversee free and fair elections. Sidy Mohamed Ould Boubacar was named as the interim prime minister and head of government.

In March 2007, presidential elections took place. There were 19 contenders but no one took absolute victory after the first round. The result was a second "runoff" round. The two largest vote-getters -- Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdellahi and Ahmed Ould Daddah -- were to contest a second round of the election, scheduled for March 25, 2007. In that second round, Abdellahi was the winner and claimed the presidency.

On Aug. 6, 2008, a military coup overthrew Mauritania's first democratically elected government in 20 years. The coup d'etat was led by a military chief -- General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz -- who was himself a key orchestrator of the previous coup in 2005, which drove the unpopular dictator, Maaouya Sid'Ahmed Ould Taya, from power. Abdel Aziz was elected in a 2009 vote, which was viewed as "a charade" by opponents.

Nevertheless, the Mauritanian Interior Ministry said that Abdel Aziz had won the presidential election with 52.58 percent of the votes, surpassing the 50 percent threshold to win the presidency. In second place was Ahmed Ould Daddah who garnered 13.66 percent of the votes.

The 2014 election --

In 2014, Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, who led the coup that deposed the democratically elected President Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdellahi in 2008 and who was elected in 2009 under a cloud of accusations about the fairness of the vote, was seeking re-election. Aziz announced his candidacy for the presidential election set to take place on June 21, 2014. If no candidate secures more than 50 percent, the two top performers would face off in a run-off election to be held on July 5, 2014.

Opposition leaders complained that the vote would be another sham, since there was no agreement on the need for electoral reforms, and the existing political structure (specifically, the election commission) favored the incumbent president. As such, many political opposition heavyweights were boycotting the vote. That being said, there was a handful of opposition candidates who would be contesting the election; this group included the former Health Minister and leader of the Party for Democracy and Harmony (El Wiam), Bodiel Ould Houmeid; Biram Ould Dah Ould Abeid, an anti-slavery activist; Ibrahima Moctar Sarr, the leader of the Alliance for Justice and Democracy / Movement for reconciliation (AJD/MR), and Mrs. Lalla Mariam Mint Moulaye Idriss.

On June 21, 2014, the election went forward in Mauritania amidst an opposition boycott. The vote count showed that President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz was decisively re-elected for another five-year term with close to 82 percent of the vote. This result ensured that there would be no need of a second round of voting. Meanwhile, at least one rival candidate, Biram Ould Dah Ould Abeid, said he would challenge the result in court on the basis of vote-rigging.

Government and Politics Update for Mauritania

On Aug. 20, 2014, Mauritanian President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz appointed Yahya Ould Hademine as the country's new prime minister and charged him with forming a new government. Hademine succeeded outgoing Prime Minister Moulaye Ould Mohamed Laghdah who served as the head of government since 2008 but who resigned from office.

Meanwhile, the next elections to the Senate in Mauritania were set to be held in 2014; however, this timeline for the polls passed by with authorities deciding to postpone the vote. At issue was an election boycott by the opposition. By March 2015, the government was hoping to engage in dialogue with the opposition and persuade them to participate in a forthcoming election to the Senate.

Editor's Note:

Mauritania, a former French colony, has witnessed repeated coups since its independence in 1960. In 2005, a coup d'etat led by Colonel Ely Ould Mohamed Vall resulted in the installation of an interim government, changes to the constitution including term limits of two years for presidents, an improved human rights situation, and the institution of democracy. Presidential elections moved the country on the path of democratization in 2007. A military coup d'etat in 2008, led by Mohamed Ould Abdelaziz, returned the country to a state of "rule by junta." A forum known as the National Dialogue recommended returning the country to civilian rule via elections in 2009. But that election in 2009, which ratified the rule of Abdelaziz, was criticized by some factions as being fraudulent and a cloak hiding the illegitimacy of the coup leadership that came to power in 2008. Note that parliamentary elections set for 2011 have been delayed indefinitely. In recent times, Mauritania has been dealing with the threat of Islamist extremist terrorism and has taken a pro-active stance in dealing with this threat.

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Written by Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman, Editor in Chief at CountryWatch.

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Supplementary sources: Amnesty International, Lexis-Nexis, Freedom House, Allafrica.com, BBC, Africa Confidential, CNN, Reliefweb, World Bank, and Menske Brhane.

Political Risk Index

Political Risk Index

The **Political Risk Index** is a proprietary index measuring the level of risk posed to governments, corporations, and investors, based on a myriad of political and economic factors. The Political Risk Index is calculated using an established methodology by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on varied criteria* including the following consideration: political stability, political representation, democratic accountability, freedom of expression, security and crime, risk of conflict, human development, jurisprudence and regulatory transparency, economic risk, foreign investment considerations, possibility of sovereign default, and corruption. Scores are assigned from 0-10 using the aforementioned criteria. A score of 0 marks the highest political risk, while a

score of 10 marks the lowest political risk. Stated differently, countries with the lowest scores pose the greatest political risk. A score of 0 marks the most dire level of political risk and an ultimate nadir, while a score of 10 marks the lowest possible level of political risk, according to this proprietary index. Rarely will there be scores of 0 or 10 due to the reality that countries contain complex landscapes; as such, the index offers a range of possibilities ranging from lesser to greater risk.

Country	Assessment
Afghanistan	2
Albania	4
Algeria	6
Andorra	9
Angola	4
Antigua	8
Argentina	4
Armenia	4-5
Australia	9.5
Austria	9.5
Azerbaijan	4

Bahamas	8.5
Bahrain	6
Bangladesh	3.5
Barbados	8.5-9
Belarus	3
Belgium	9
Belize	8
Benin	5
Bhutan	5
Bolivia	5
Bosnia-Herzegovina	4
Botswana	7
Brazil	7
Brunei	7
Bulgaria	6
Burkina Faso	4
Burma (Myanmar)	4.5
Burundi	3

Cambodia	4
Cameroon	5
Canada	9.5
Cape Verde	6
Central African Republic	3
Chad	4
Chile	9
China	7
China: Hong Kong	8
China: Taiwan	8
Colombia	7
Comoros	5
Congo DRC	3
Congo RC	4
Costa Rica	8
Cote d'Ivoire	4.5
Croatia	7
Cuba	4-4.5

Cyprus	5
Czech Republic	8
Denmark	9.5
Djibouti	4.5
Dominica	7
Dominican Republic	6
East Timor	5
Ecuador	6
Egypt	5
El Salvador	7
Equatorial Guinea	4
Eritrea	3
Estonia	8
Ethiopia	4
Fiji	5
Finland	9
Fr.YugoslavRep.Macedonia	5
France	9

Gabon	5
Gambia	4
Georgia	5
Germany	9.5
Ghana	6
Greece	4.5-5
Grenada	8
Guatemala	6
Guinea	3.5
Guinea-Bissau	3.5
Guyana	4.5
Haiti	3.5
Holy See (Vatican)	9
Honduras	4.5-5
Hungary	7
Iceland	8.5-9
India	7.5-8
Indonesia	6

Iran	3.5-4
Iraq	2.5-3
Ireland	8-8.5
Israel	8
Italy	7.5
Jamaica	6.5-7
Japan	9
Jordan	6.5
Kazakhstan	6
Kenya	5
Kiribati	7
Korea, North	1
Korea, South	8
Kosovo	4
Kuwait	7
Kyrgyzstan	4.5
Laos	4.5
Latvia	7

Lebanon	5.5
Lesotho	6
Liberia	3.5
Libya	2
Liechtenstein	9
Lithuania	7.5
Luxembourg	9
Madagascar	4
Malawi	4
Malaysia	8
Maldives	4.5
Mali	4
Malta	8
Marshall Islands	6
Mauritania	4.5-5
Mauritius	7
Mexico	6.5
Micronesia	7

Moldova	5
Monaco	9
Mongolia	5
Montenegro	6
Morocco	6.5
Mozambique	4.5-5
Namibia	6.5-7
Nauru	6
Nepal	4
Netherlands	9.5
New Zealand	9.5
Nicaragua	5
Niger	4
Nigeria	4.5
Norway	9.5
Oman	7
Pakistan	3.5
Palau	7

Panama	7.5
Papua New Guinea	5
Paraguay	6.5-7
Peru	7
Philippines	6
Poland	8
Portugal	7.5
Qatar	7.5
Romania	5.5
Russia	5.5
Rwanda	5
Saint Kitts and Nevis	8
Saint Lucia	8
Saint Vincent and Grenadines	8
Samoa	7
San Marino	9
Sao Tome and Principe	5.5
Saudi Arabia	6

Senegal	6
Serbia	5
Seychelles	7
Sierra Leone	4.5
Singapore	9
Slovak Republic (Slovakia)	8
Slovenia	8
Solomon Islands	6
Somalia	2
South Africa	7
Spain	7.5
Sri Lanka	5
Sudan	3.5
Suriname	5
Swaziland	5
Sweden	9.5
Switzerland	9.5
Syria	2

Tajikistan	4.5
Tanzania	6
Thailand	6.5
Togo	4.5
Tonga	7
Trinidad and Tobago	8
Tunisia	6
Turkey	7
Turkmenistan	4.5
Tuvalu	7
Uganda	6
Ukraine	3.5-4
United Arab Emirates	7
United Kingdom	9
United States	9.5
Uruguay	8
Uzbekistan	4
Vanuatu	7

Venezuela	4
Vietnam	5
Yemen	3
Zambia	4.5
Zimbabwe	3

*Methodology

The Political Risk Index is calculated by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on the combined scoring of varied criteria as follows --

1. political stability (record of peaceful transitions of power, ability of government to stay in office and carry out policies as a result of productive executive-legislative relationship, perhaps with popular support vis a vis risk of government collapse)

2. political representation (right of suffrage, free and fair elections, multi-party participation, and influence of foreign powers)

3. democratic accountability (record of respect for political rights, human rights, and civil liberties, backed by constitutional protections)

4. freedom of expression (media freedom and freedom of expression, right to dissent or express political opposition, backed by constitutional protections)

5. security and crime (the degree to which a country has security mechanisms that ensures safety of citizens and ensures law and order, without resorting to extra-judicial measures)

6. risk of conflict (the presence of conflict; record of coups or civil disturbances; threat of war; threats posed by internal or external tensions; threat or record of terrorism or insurgencies)

7. human development (quality of life; access to education; socio-economic conditions; systemic concern for the status of women and children)

8. jurisprudence and regulatory transparency (the impartiality of the legal system, the degree of transparency within the regulatory system of a country and the durability of that structure)

9. economic conditions (economic stability, investment climate, degree of nationalization of industries, property rights, labor force development)

10. corruption (the degree of corruption in a country and/or efforts by the government to address graft and other irregularities)

Editor's Note:

As of 2015, the current climate of upheaval internationally -- both politically and economically -- has affected the ratings for several countries across the world.

North Korea, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Zimbabwe -- retain their low rankings.

Several Middle Eastern and North African countries, such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Iraq and Yemen were downgraded in recent years due to political instability occurring in the "season of unrest" sweeping the region since 2011 and continuing today. The worst downgrades affected Syria where civil war is at play, along with the rampage of terror being carried out by Islamist terrorists who have also seized control over part of Syrian territory. Iraq has been further downgraded due to the rampage of Islamist terrorists and their takeover of wide swaths of Iraqi territory. Libya has also been downgraded further due to its slippage into failed state status; at issue in Libya have been an ongoing power struggle between rival militias. Yemen continues to hold steady with a poor ranking due to continued unrest at the hands of Houthi rebels, secessinionists, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, and Islamic State. Its landscape has been further complicated by the fact that it is now the site of a proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Conversely, Tunisia and Egypt have seen slight upgrades as these countries stabilize.

In Africa, Zimbabwe continues to be one of the bleak spots of the world with the Mugabe regime effectively destroying the country's once vibrant economy, and miring Zimbabwe with an exceedingly high rate of inflation, debilitating unemployment, devolving public services, and critical food shortages; rampant crime and political oppression round out the landscape. Somalia also sports a poor ranking due to the continuing influence of the terror group, al-Shabab, which was not operating across the border in Kenya. On the upside, Nigeria, which was ineffectively dealing with the threat posed by the terror group, Boko Haram, was making some strides on the national security front with its new president at the helm. Mali was slightly upgraded due to its efforts to return to constitutional order following the 2012 coup and to neutralize the threat of separatists and Islamists. But the Central African Republic was downgraded due to the takeover of the government by Muslim Seleka rebels and a continued state of lawlessness in that country. South Sudan -- the world's newest nation state -- has not been officially included in this assessment;

however, it can be unofficially assessed to be in the vicinity of "3" due to its manifold political and economic challenges. Burkina Faso, Burundi and Guinea have been downgraded due to political unrest, with Guinea also having to deal with the burgeoning Ebola crisis.

In Europe, Ukraine was downgraded due to the unrest facing that country following its Maidan revolution that triggered a pro-Russian uprising in the eastern part of the country. Russia was also implicated in the Ukrainian crisis due to its intervention on behalf of pro-Russian separatists, as well as its annexation of the Ukrainian territory of Crimea. Strains on the infrastructure of southern and eastern European countries, such as Serbia, Croatia, and Hungary, due to an influx of refugees was expected to pose social and economic challenges, and slight downgrades were made accordingly. So too, a corruption crisis for the Romanian prime minister has affected the ranking of that country. Meanwhile, the rankings for Spain, Portugal, Ireland, and Italy were maintained due to debt woes and the concomitant effect on the euro zone. Greece, another euro zone nation, was earlier downgraded due to its sovereign debt crisis; however, no further downgrade was added since the country was able to successfully forge a bailout rescue deal with creditor institutions. Cyprus' exposure to Greek banks yielded a downgrade in its case.

In Asia, Nepal was downgraded in response to continuous political instability and a constitutional crisis that prevails well after landmark elections were held. Both India and China retain their rankings; India holds a slightly higher ranking than China due to its record of democratic representation and accountability. Increasing violence and political instability in Pakistan resulted in a downgrade for this country's already low rating. Meanwhile, Singapore retained its strong rankings due to its continued effective stewardship of the economy and political stability.

In the Americas, ongoing political and economic woes, as well as crime and corruption have affected the rankings for Mexico , Guatemala, and Brazil. Argentina was downgraded due to its default on debt following the failure of talks with bond holders. Venezuela was downgraded due to its mix of market unfriendly policies and political oppression. For the moment, the United States maintains a strong ranking along with Canada, and most of the English-speaking countries of the Caribbean; however, a renewed debt ceiling crisis could cause the United States to be downgraded in a future edition. Finally, a small but significant upgrade was attributed to Cuba due to its recent pro-business reforms and its normalization of ties with the Unitd States.

Source:

Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman, Editor in Chief, CountryWatch Inc. www.countrywatch.com

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Political Stability

Political Stability

The **Political Stability Index** is a proprietary index measuring a country's level of stability, standard of good governance, record of constitutional order, respect for human rights, and overall strength of democracy. The Political Stability Index is calculated using an established methodology* by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on a given country's record of peaceful transitions of power, ability of a government to stay in office and carry out its policies vis a vis risk credible risks of government collapse. Threats include coups, domestic violence and instability, terrorism, etc. This index measures the dynamic between the quality of a country's government and the threats that can compromise and undermine stability. Scores are assigned from 0-10 using the aforementioned criteria. A score of 0 marks the lowest level of political stability and an ultimate nadir, while a score of 10 marks the highest level of political stability possible, according to this proprietary index. Rarely will there be scores of 0 or 10 due to the reality that countries contain complex landscapes; as such, the index offers a range of possibilities ranging from lesser to greater stability.

Country	Assessment
Afghanistan	2
Albania	4.5-5
Algeria	5
Andorra	9.5
Angola	4.5-5
Antigua	8.5-9

Argentina	7
Armenia	5.5
Australia	9.5
Austria	9.5
Azerbaijan	5
Bahamas	9
Bahrain	6
Bangladesh	4.5
Barbados	9
Belarus	4
Belgium	9
Belize	8
Benin	5
Bhutan	5
Bolivia	6
Bosnia-Herzegovina	5
Botswana	8.5
Brazil	7

Brunei	8
Bulgaria	7.5
Burkina Faso	4
Burma (Myanmar)	4.5
Burundi	4
Cambodia	4.5-5
Cameroon	6
Canada	9.5
Cape Verde	6
Central African Republic	3
Chad	4.5
Chile	9
China	7
China: Hong Kong	8
China: Taiwan	8
Colombia	7.5
Comoros	5
Congo DRC	3

Congo RC	5
Costa Rica	9.5
Cote d'Ivoire	3.5
Croatia	7.5
Cuba	4.5
Cyprus	8
Czech Republic	8.5
Denmark	9.5
Djibouti	5
Dominica	8.5
Dominican Republic	7
East Timor	5
Ecuador	7
Egypt	4.5-5
El Salvador	7.5-8
Equatorial Guinea	4.5
Eritrea	4
Estonia	9

Ethiopia	4.5
Fiji	5
Finland	9
Fr.YugoslavRep.Macedonia	6.5
France	9
Gabon	5
Gambia	4.5
Georgia	5
Germany	9.5
Ghana	7
Greece	6
Grenada	8.5
Guatemala	7
Guinea	3.5-4
Guinea-Bissau	4
Guyana	6
Haiti	3.5-4
Holy See (Vatican)	9.5

Honduras	6
Hungary	7.5
Iceland	9
India	8
Indonesia	7
Iran	3.5
Iraq	2.5
Ireland	9.5
Israel	8
Italy	8.5-9
Jamaica	8
Japan	9
Jordan	6
Kazakhstan	6
Kenya	5
Kiribati	8
Korea, North	2
Korea, South	8.5

Kosovo	5.5
Kuwait	7
Kyrgyzstan	5
Laos	5
Latvia	8.5
Lebanon	5.5
Lesotho	5
Liberia	3.5-4
Libya	2
Liechtenstein	9
Lithuania	9
Luxembourg	9.5
Madagascar	4
Malawi	5
Malaysia	8
Maldives	4.5-5
Mali	4.5-5
Malta	9

Marshall Islands	8
Mauritania	6
Mauritius	8
Mexico	6.5-7
Micronesia	8
Moldova	5.5
Monaco	9.5
Mongolia	6.5-7
Montenegro	8
Morocco	7
Mozambique	5
Namibia	8.5
Nauru	8
Nepal	4.5
Netherlands	9.5
New Zealand	9.5
Nicaragua	6
Niger	4.5

Nigeria	4.5
Norway	9.5
Oman	7
Pakistan	3
Palau	8
Panama	8.5
Papua New Guinea	6
Paraguay	8
Peru	7.5
Philippines	6
Poland	9
Portugal	9
Qatar	7
Romania	7
Russia	6
Rwanda	5
Saint Kitts and Nevis	9
Saint Lucia	9

Saint Vincent and Grenadines	9
Samoa	8
San Marino	9.5
Sao Tome and Principe	7
Saudi Arabia	6
Senegal	7.5
Serbia	6.5
Seychelles	8
Sierra Leone	4.5
Singapore	9.5
Slovak Republic (Slovakia)	8.5
Slovenia	9
Solomon Islands	6.5-7
Somalia	2
South Africa	7.5
Spain	9
Sri Lanka	5
Sudan	3

Suriname	5
Swaziland	5
Sweden	9.5
Switzerland	9.5
Syria	2
Tajikistan	4.5
Tanzania	6
Thailand	6
Togo	5
Tonga	7
Trinidad and Tobago	8
Tunisia	5
Turkey	7.5
Turkmenistan	5
Tuvalu	8.5
Uganda	6
Ukraine	3.5-4
United Arab Emirates	7

United Kingdom	9
United States	9
Uruguay	8.5
Uzbekistan	4
Vanuatu	8.5
Venezuela	4.5-5
Vietnam	4.5
Yemen	2.5
Zambia	5
Zimbabwe	3

*Methodology

The Political Stability Index is calculated by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on the combined scoring of varied criteria as follows --

1. record of peaceful transitions of power (free and fair elections; adherence to political accords)

2. record of democratic representation, presence of instruments of democracy; systemic accountability

3. respect for human rights; respect for civil rights

4. strength of the system of jurisprudence, adherence to constitutional order, and good governance

5. ability of a government to stay in office and carry out its policies vis a vis risk credible risks of government collapse (i.e. government stability versus a country being deemed "ungovernable")

6. threat of coups, insurgencies, and insurrection

7. level of unchecked crime and corruption

8. risk of terrorism and other threats to national security

9. relationship with regional powers and international community; record of bilateral or multilateral cooperation

10. degree of economic strife (i.e. economic and financial challenges)

Editor's Note:

As of 2015, the current climate of upheaval internationally -- both politically and economically -- has affected the ratings for several countries across the world. The usual suspects -- North Korea, Afghanistan, and Somalia -- retain their low rankings. The reclusive and ultra-dictatorial North Korean regime, which has terrified the world with its nuclear threats, has exhibited internal instability. Of note was a cut-throat purge of hundreds of high ranking officials deemed to be a threat to Kim Jung-un. Despite their attempts to recover from years of lawlessness, war, and warlordism, both Afghanistan and Somalia continue to be beset by terrorism and turmoil. In Afghanistan, while international forces have seen success in the effort against the terror group, al-Qaida, the other Islamist extremist group, the Taliban, continues to carry out a vicious insurgency using terrorism.   In Somalia, while the government attempts to do the nation's business, the terror group, al-Shabab continues to make its presence known not only in Somalia, but across the border into Kenya with devastating results/ Also in this category is   Iraq, which continues to be rocked by horrific violence and terrorism at the hands of Islamic State, which has taken over wide swaths of Iraqi territory.

Syria, Libya, and Yemen have been added to this unfortunate echelon of the world's most politically unstable countries. Syria has been mired by the twin hazards of 1. a civil war as rebels oppose the Assad regime; and 2. the rampage of terror being carried out by Islamic State, which also seized control over vast portions of Syrian territory. Meanwhile, the post-Qaddhafi landscape of Libya has devolved into chaos as rival militias battle for control -- the elected government of the country notwithstanding. Rounding out this grim triad is Yemen, which was dealing with a Houthi rebellion, secesionists in the south, as well as the threat of terrorism from al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula as well as Islamic State, while also being the site of a proxy war between Shi'a Iran and Sunni Saudi Arabia.

Meanwhile, several Middle Eastern and North African countries, such as Tunisia, Egypt, and

Bahrain were downgraded in recent years due to political instability occurring in the "season of unrest" sweeping the region since 2011 and continuing today. All three of these countries have stabilized in recent years and have been upgraded accordingly. In Bahrain, the landscape had calmed. In Egypt, the secular military-backed government has generated criticism for its crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood; however, the country had ratified the presidency via democratic elections and were on track to hold parliamentary elections as the country moved along the path of democratization. Perhaps the most impressive story was coming out of Tunisia -- the country whose Jasmine Revolution sparked the entire Arab Spring -- and where after a few years of strife, a new progressive constitution was passed into law and a secular government had been elected to power. Tunisia, Egypt, and Bahrain have seen slight upgrades as these countries stabilize.

In Africa, the Central African Republic was downgraded the previous year due to the takeover of the government by Muslim Seleka rebels. Although the country has been trying to emerge from this crisis, the fact of the matter was that it was difficult to halt the precipitous decline into lawlessness in that country. Zimbabwe has maintained its consistently poor ranking due to the dictatorial regime of Mugabe, who continues to hold a tight grip on power, intimidates the opposition, squashes dissent, and oppresses the white farmer population of the country. Moving in a slightly improved direction is Nigeria, which has sported abysmal ratings due to the government's fecklessness in dealing with the threat posed by the Islamist terror group, Boko Haram. Under its newly-elected government, there appears to be more of a concerted effort to make national security a priority action item. Mali was also slightly upgraded due to its efforts to return to constitutional order following the 2012 coup and to neutralize the threat of separatists and Islamists. Political instability has visited Burkina Faso and Burundi as the leaders of those countries attempted to side-step constitutional limits to hold onto power. In Burundi, an attempted coup ensued but quelled, and the president won a (questionable) new term in office; unrest has since punctuated the landscape. In Burkina Faso, the political climate has turned stormy as a result of a successful coup that ended the rule of the president, and then a putsch against the transitional government. These two African countries have been downgraded as a result.

It should be noted that the African country of South Sudan -- the world's newest nation state -- has not been officially included in this assessment; however, it can be unofficially assessed to be in the vicinity of "3" due to its manifold political and economic challenges. Guinea has endured poor rankings throughout, but was slightly downgraded further over fears of social unrest and the Ebola heath crisis.

In Europe, Ukraine was downgraded due to the unrest facing that country following its Maidan revolution that triggered a pro-Russian uprising in the eastern part of the country. Russia was also implicated in the Ukrainian crisis due to its intervention on behalf of pro-Russian separatists, as well as its annexation of the Ukrainian territory of Crimea. Serbia and Albania were slightly downgraded due to eruptions of unrest, while Romania was slightly downgraded on the basis of

corruption charges against the prime minister. [Spain](), [Portugal](), [Ireland](), and [Italy]() were downgraded due to debt woes and the concomitant effect on the euro zone. [Greece](), another euro zone nation, was downgraded the previous year due to its sovereign debt crisis; however, the country successfully forged a rescue deal with international creditors and stayed within the Euro zone. Greek voters rewarded the hitherto unknown upstart party at the polls for these efforts. As a result, [Greece]() was actually upgraded slightly as it proved to the world that it could endure the political and economic storms. Meanwhile, [Germany](), [France](), [Switzerland](), the [United Kingdom](), the [Netherlands](), and the Scandinavian countries continue to post impressive ranking consistent with these countries' strong records of democracy, freedom, and peaceful transfers of power.

In Asia, [Nepal]() was downgraded in response to continuous political instability well after landmark elections that prevails today. [Cambodia]() was very slighly downgraded due to post-election instability that has resulted in occasional flares of violence. Despite the "trifecta of tragedy" in [Japan]() in 2011 -- the earthquake, the ensuing tsunami, and the resulting nuclear crisis -- and the appreciable destabilization of the economic and political terrain therein, this country has only slightly been downgraded. Japan's challenges have been assessed to be transient, the government remains accountable, and there is little risk of default. Both [India]() and China retain their rankings; [India]() holds a slightly higher ranking than [China]() due to its record of democratic representation and accountability. Increasing violence and political instability in [Pakistan]() resulted in a downgrade for this country's already low rating.

In the Americas, [Haiti]() retained its downgraded status due to ongoing political and economic woes. [Mexico]() was downgraded due to its alarming rate of crime. [Guatemala]() was downgraded due to charges of corruption, the arrest of the president, and uncertainty over the outcome of elections. [Brazil]() was downgraded due to the corruption charges erupting on the political landscape, the stalling of the economy, and the increasingly loud calls for the impeachment of President Rousseff. [Argentina]() was downgraded due to its default on debt following the failure of talks with bond holders. [Venezuela]() was downgraded due to the fact that the country's post-Chavez government is every bit as autocratic and nationalistic, but even more inclined to oppress its political opponents. [Colombia]() was upgraded slightly due to efforts aimed at securing a peace deal with the FARC insurgents. A small but significant upgrade was attributed to [Cuba]() due to its recent pro-business reforms and its normalization of ties with the Unitd States. Meanwhile, the [United States](), [Canada](), [Costa Rica](), [Panama](), and most of the English-speaking countries of the Caribbean retain their strong rankings due to their records of stability and peaceful transfers of power.

In the Pacific, [Fiji]() was upgraded due to its return to constitutional order and democracy with the holding of the first elections in eight years.

In Oceania, [Maldives]() has been slightly downgraded due to the government's continued and rather relentless persecution of the country's former pro-democracy leader - former President Nasheed.

Source:

Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman, Editor in Chief, CountryWatch Inc. www.countrywatch.com

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Freedom Rankings

Freedom Rankings

Freedom in the World

Editor's Note: This ranking by Freedom House quantifies political freedom and civil liberties into a single combined index on each sovereign country's level of freedom and liberty. The initials "PR" and "CL" stand for Political Rights and Civil Liberties, respectively. The number 1 represents the most free countries and the number 7 represents the least free. Several countries fall in the continuum in between. The freedom ratings reflect an overall judgment based on survey results.

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Status	Trend Arrow
Afghanistan	6 ?	6	Not Free	
Albania*	3	3	Partly Free	
Algeria	6	5	Not Free	

Andorra*	1	1	Free	
Angola	6	5	Not Free	
Antigua and Barbuda*	3 ?	2	Free	
Argentina*	2	2	Free	
Armenia	6	4	Partly Free	
Australia*	1	1	Free	
Austria*	1	1	Free	
Azerbaijan	6	5	Not Free	
Bahamas*	1	1	Free	
Bahrain	6 ?	5	Not Free ?	
Bangladesh*	3 ?	4	Partly Free	
Barbados*	1	1	Free	
Belarus	7	6	Not Free	
Belgium*	1	1	Free	
Belize*	1	2	Free	
Benin*	2	2	Free	
Bhutan	4	5	Partly Free	
Bolivia*	3	3	Partly Free	

Bosnia-Herzegovina*	4	3	Partly Free	
Botswana*	3 ?	2	Free	
Brazil*	2	2	Free	
Brunei	6	5	Not Free	
Bulgaria*	2	2	Free	
Burkina Faso	5	3	Partly Free	
Burma	7	7	Not Free	
Burundi*	4	5	Partly Free	⇑
Cambodia	6	5	Not Free	⇓
Cameroon	6	6	Not Free	
Canada*	1	1	Free	
Cape Verde*	1	1	Free	
Central African Republic	5	5	Partly Free	
Chad	7	6	Not Free	
Chile*	1	1	Free	
China	7	6	Not Free	
Colombia*	3	4	Partly Free	
Comoros*	3	4	Partly Free	

Congo (Brazzaville)	6	5	Not Free	⇓
Congo (Kinshasa)	6	6	Not Free	⇓
Costa Rica*	1	1	Free	
Cote d'Ivoire	6	5	Not Free	
Croatia*	1 ?	2	Free	
Cuba	7	6	Not Free	
Cyprus*	1	1	Free	
Czech Republic*	1	1	Free	
Denmark*	1	1	Free	
Djibouti	5	5	Partly Free	
Dominica*	1	1	Free	
Dominican Republic*	2	2	Free	⇓
East Timor*	3	4	Partly Free	
Ecuador*	3	3	Partly Free	
Egypt	6	5	Not Free	
El Salvador*	2	3	Free	
Equatorial Guinea	7	7	Not Free	
Eritrea	7	7 ?	Not Free	

Estonia*	1	1	Free	
Ethiopia	5	5	Partly Free	⇓
Fiji	6	4	Partly Free	
Finland*	1	1	Free	
France*	1	1	Free	
Gabon	6	5 ?	Not Free ?	
The Gambia	5	5 ?	Partly Free	
Georgia	4	4	Partly Free	
Germany*	1	1	Free	
Ghana*	1	2	Free	
Greece*	1	2	Free	
Grenada*	1	2	Free	
Guatemala*	4 ?	4	Partly Free	
Guinea	7	6 ?	Not Free	
Guinea-Bissau*	4	4	Partly Free	
Guyana*	2	3	Free	
Haiti*	4	5	Partly Free	
Honduras	4 ?	4 ?	Partly Free	

Hungary*	1	1	Free	
Iceland*	1	1	Free	
India*	2	3	Free	
Indonesia*	2	3	Free	
Iran	6	6	Not Free	⇓
Iraq	5 ?	6	Not Free	
Ireland*	1	1	Free	
Israel*	1	2	Free	
Italy*	1	2	Free	
Jamaica*	2	3	Free	
Japan*	1	2	Free	
Jordan	6 ?	5	Not Free ?	
Kazakhstan	6	5	Not Free	⇓
Kenya	4	4 ?	Partly Free	
Kiribati*	1	1	Free	
Kosovo	5 ?	4 ?	Partly Free ?	
Kuwait	4	4	Partly Free	
Kyrgyzstan	6 ?	5 ?	Not Free ?	

Laos	7	6	Not Free	
Latvia*	2	1	Free	
Lebanon	5	3 ?	Partly Free	
Lesotho*	3 ?	3	Partly Free ?	
Liberia*	3	4	Partly Free	
Libya	7	7	Not Free	
Liechtenstein*	1	1	Free	
Lithuania*	1	1	Free	
Luxembourg*	1	1	Free	
Macedonia*	3	3	Partly Free	⇑
Madagascar	6 ?	4 ?	Partly Free	
Malawi*	3 ?	4	Partly Free	
Malaysia	4	4	Partly Free	
Maldives*	3 ?	4	Partly Free	
Mali*	2	3	Free	
Malta*	1	1	Free	⇓
Marshall Islands*	1	1	Free	
Mauritania	6	5	Not Free	

Mauritius*	1	2	Free	
Mexico*	2	3	Free	
Micronesia*	1	1	Free	
Moldova*	3 ?	4	Partly Free	
Monaco*	2	1	Free	
Mongolia*	2	2	Free	⇑
Montenegro*	3	2 ?	Free ?	
Morocco	5	4	Partly Free	⇓
Mozambique	4 ?	3	Partly Free	
Namibia*	2	2	Free	
Nauru*	1	1	Free	
Nepal	4	4	Partly Free	
Netherlands*	1	1	Free	
New Zealand*	1	1	Free	
Nicaragua*	4	4 ?	Partly Free	
Niger	5 ?	4	Partly Free	
Nigeria	5	4	Partly Free	⇓
North Korea	7	7	Not Free	⇓

Norway*	1	1	Free	
Oman	6	5	Not Free	
Pakistan	4	5	Partly Free	
Palau*	1	1	Free	
Panama*	1	2	Free	
Papua New Guinea*	4	3	Partly Free	
Paraguay*	3	3	Partly Free	
Peru*	2	3	Free	
Philippines	4	3	Partly Free	⇓
Poland*	1	1	Free	
Portugal*	1	1	Free	
Qatar	6	5	Not Free	
Romania*	2	2	Free	
Russia	6	5	Not Free	⇓
Rwanda	6	5	Not Free	
Saint Kitts and Nevis*	1	1	Free	
Saint Lucia*	1	1	Free	
Saint Vincent and Grenadines*	2	1	Free	

Samoa*	2	2	Free	
San Marino*	1	1	Free	
Sao Tome and Principe*	2	2	Free	
Saudi Arabia	7	6	Not Free	
Senegal*	3	3	Partly Free	
Serbia*	2 ?	2	Free	
Seychelles*	3	3	Partly Free	
Sierra Leone*	3	3	Partly Free	
Singapore	5	4	Partly Free	
Slovakia*	1	1	Free	⇓
Slovenia*	1	1	Free	
Solomon Islands	4	3	Partly Free	
Somalia	7	7	Not Free	
South Africa*	2	2	Free	
South Korea*	1	2	Free	
Spain*	1	1	Free	
Sri Lanka*	4	4	Partly Free	
Sudan	7	7	Not Free	

Suriname*	2	2	Free	
Swaziland	7	5	Not Free	
Sweden*	1	1	Free	
Switzerland*	1	1	Free	⇓
Syria	7	6	Not Free	
Taiwan*	1 ?	2 ?	Free	
Tajikistan	6	5	Not Free	
Tanzania	4	3	Partly Free	
Thailand	5	4	Partly Free	
Togo	5	4 ?	Partly Free	
Tonga	5	3	Partly Free	
Trinidad and Tobago*	2	2	Free	
Tunisia	7	5	Not Free	
Turkey*	3	3	Partly Free	⇓
Turkmenistan	7	7	Not Free	
Tuvalu*	1	1	Free	
Uganda	5	4	Partly Free	
Ukraine*	3	2	Free	

United Arab Emirates	6	5	Not Free	
United Kingdom*	1	1	Free	
United States*	1	1	Free	
Uruguay*	1	1	Free	
Uzbekistan	7	7	Not Free	
Vanuatu*	2	2	Free	
Venezuela	5 ?	4	Partly Free	
Vietnam	7	5	Not Free	⇓
Yemen	6 ?	5	Not Free ?	
Zambia*	3	4 ?	Partly Free	
Zimbabwe	6 ?	6	Not Free	

Methodology:

PR and CL stand for political rights and civil liberties, respectively; 1 represents the most free and 7 the least free rating. The ratings reflect an overall judgment based on survey results.

? ? up or down indicates a change in political rights, civil liberties, or status since the last survey.
⇑ ⇓ up or down indicates a trend of positive or negative changes that took place but that were not sufficient to result in a change in political rights or civil liberties ratings of 1-7.

* indicates a country's status as an electoral democracy.

Source:

This data is derived from the latest edition of Freedom House's Freedom in the World 2010 edition.

Available at URL: http://www.freedomhouse.org

Updated:

Reviewed in 2015

Human Rights

Human Rights in Mauritania

Overview

On August 3, 2005, President Maaouiya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya was overthrown in a bloodless coup and Colonel Ely Ould Mohammed Fal established the ruling Military Council for Justice and Democracy (MCJD). The council has appointed a transitional government and phased elections began in 2006.

The fact that Mauritania is moving in the direction of democratic elections does not mitigate its poor human rights record. Indeed, the poor human rights situation in Mauritaniais not helped by a variety of environmental, societal, and economic factors. Drought, desertification, flooding, locust invasion, widespread poverty, high rates of unemployment, rapid urbanization without proper infrastructure, and a very high foreign debt, are all factors negatively impacting the ability to focus, let alone improve, the human rights situation in Mauritania.

The government, judiciary, and security forces all suffer from corruption and lack of transparency. Impunity and lack of access to government information also present challenges. The judiciary is externally influenced by the executive branch. The government also limits the freedoms of speech, assembly, association, press, and religion. It also refuses to recognize many nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and human rights organizations.

Prison conditions are harsh and often life threatening. Arbitrary arrest and detention and illegal searches of homes and property are also actions taken by the security forces.

Ethnic and racial tensions, as well as slavery in the form of involuntary servitude, persist throughout the nation. Trafficking in persons and child labor are also human rights abuses perpetrated in Mauritania.

Human Development Index (HDI) Rank:

See full listing of the Human Development Index located in the Social Overview of this report for this country's current rank.

Human Poverty Index Rank:

79th out of 103

Gini Index:

39.0

Life Expectancy at Birth (years):

52 years

Unemployment Rate:

20%

Population living on $1 a day (%):

25.9%

Population living on $2 a day (%):

63.1%

Population living beneath the Poverty Line (%):

46.3%

Internally Displaced People:

N/A

Total Crime Rate (%):

N/A

Health Expenditure (% of GDP):

Public: 2.9%

% of GDP Spent on Education:

N/A

Human Rights Conventions Party to:

- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- Conventions on the Rights of the Child
- Convention relating to the Status of Refugees

*Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite index that measures the level of well-being in 177 nations in the world. It uses factors such as poverty, literacy, life-expectancy, education, gross domestic product, and purchasing power parity to assess the average achievements in each nation. It has been used in the United Nation's Human Development Report since 1993.

*Human Poverty Index Ranking is based on certain indicators used to calculate the Human Poverty Index. Probability at birth of not surviving to age 40, adult literacy rate, population without sustainable access to an improved water source, and population below income poverty line are the

indicators assessed in this measure.

*The Gini Index measures inequality based on the distribution of family income or consumption. A value of 0 represents perfect equality (income being distributed equally), and a value of 100 perfect inequality (income all going to one individual).

*The calculation of the total crime rate is the % of the total population which has been effected by property crime, robbery, sexual assault, assault, or bribery (corruption) related occurrences.

Government Functions

From independence until 1978, Mauritania was a one-party state. With the overthrow Moktar Ould Daddah, the constitution was suspended and the country was governed by fiat. With his ascendancy in 1984, Chairman Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya, formed a cabinet of comprised of military officers holding ministerial portfolios.

In July 1991, Mauritania committed itself to major democratic reforms. A new constitution was adopted by referendum July 12, 1991, though many of its elements have not been implemented to the fullest extent possible. It is largely based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and the African Charter of Human and People's Rights of 1981.

The constitution guarantees the rights of freedom, opinion, expression, assembly, press, belonging to any political or trade union organization. The constitution further guarantees all regularly authorized foreigners the protection of the state for themselves and their properties. The 1991 constitution also provides for the establishment of a multiparty political system.

The president is the head of state, elected by universal adult suffrage for a period of five years. Following Article 24 of the constitution the president is to act as guardian of the constitution, represent the power of state, ensure the regular functioning of public power, and act as guarantor

of national independence and territorial integrity. Article 40 dictates that "in the case of vacancy or an incapacity declared to be absolute by the Constitutional Council, the President of the Senate shall become the interim President of the Republic for managing current business."

The president is empowered to appoint a prime minister. The prime minister, as the head of government, leads the cabinet, called the Council of Ministers. In addition, there are two advisory bodies, a Constitutional Council and a Supreme Islamic Council. Within the constitution, there is also a provision for an Economic and Social Council.

According to the constitution, the bicameral parliament is made up of lower and upper houses. Legislative power is vested the Senate or Majlis al-Shuyukh (56 seats) and the National Assembly or Majlis al-Watani (146 seats).

The government bureaucracy is itself composed of ministries, special agencies, and nationalized companies. The Ministry of Interior controls a system of regional governors and prefects modeled on the French system of local administration. Under this system, Mauritania is divided into 13 regions (wilayas, singular - wilaya).

The Constitutional Council is composed of six members, appointed for a nine-year, non-renewable term. Renewed by thirds every three years. The judicial branch is independent of the executive and legislative branches. Directed by the Upper Council of the Magislature, safeguards individual freedoms and insures enforcement according to the terms of law. The government accounting office oversees and presents reports on the budget.

Notable in an otherwise common presidential-parliamentary hybrid system is the lacking role of women in politics even compared to other Muslim countries. There were no occurrences of women in politics before the 1996 elections.

Editor's Note:

In 2005, a coup d'etat led by Colonel Ely Ould Mohamed Vall, resulted in the installation of an interim government, changes to the constitution including term limits of two years for presidents, as well as an improved human rights situation, and the institution of democracy. Presidential elections moved the country on the path of democratization in 2007.   The military coup d'etat in 2008 returned the country to a state of "rule by junta."

Supplementary sources: Constitution of the Republic of Mauritania and SIPRI.

Government Structure

Names:
conventional long form:
Islamic Republic of Mauritania
conventional short form:
Mauritania
local long form:
Al Jumhuriyah al Islamiyah al Muritaniyah
local short form:
Muritaniyah

Type:
Republic

Executive Branch:
Editor's Note on President:
General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz (since 2008). Aziz was a key orchestrator of the previous coup in 2005, which drove the unpopular dictator, Maaouya Sid'Ahmed Ould Taya, from power. Abdel Aziz was elected in a 2009 vote, which was viewed as "a charade" by opponents. Nevertheless, the Mauritanian Interior Ministry said that Abdel Aziz had won the presidential election with 52.58 percent of the votes, surpassing the 50 percent threshold to win the presidency. In second place was Ahmed Ould Daddah who garnered 13.66 percent of the votes. The next elections were held by 2014 and resulted in a decisive re-election victory for President Aziz.

Primer on 2014 presidential election in Mauritania:
First round - June 21, 2014; second round - July 5, 2014 --
A presidential election was set to be held in Mauritania on June 21, 2104. If no candidate secures more than 50 percent on that day, the two top performers would face off in a runoff election to be held on July 5, 2014.

Background --

On Aug. 4, 2005, a coup d'etat by the Military Council for Justice and Democracy ousted the regime of Maaouiya Ould Sid Ahmed Taya from power. Security Chief Colonel Ely Ould Mohammed Vall was identified as leader of the apparent coup d'etat. Taya had been out of the country at the time and was expected to remain in Niger at least until permanent exile could be arranged. Several days after the apparent coup d'etat, the new military council said it intended to administer control over the country for a transitional period of two years, after which it would oversee free and fair elections. Sidy Mohamed Ould Boubacar was named as the interim prime minister and head of government.

In March 2007, presidential elections took place. There were 19 contenders but no one took absolute victory after the first round. The result was a second "runoff" round. The two largest vote-getters -- Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdellahi and Ahmed Ould Daddah -- were to contest a second round of the election, scheduled for March 25, 2007. In that second round, Abdellahi was the winner and claimed the presidency.

On Aug. 6, 2008, a military coup overthrew Mauritania's first democratically elected government in 20 years. The coup d'etat was led by a military chief -- General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz -- who was himself a key orchestrator of the previous coup in 2005, which drove the unpopular dictator, Maaouya Sid'Ahmed Ould Taya, from power. Abdel Aziz was elected in a 2009 vote, which was viewed as "a charade" by opponents.

Nevertheless, the Mauritanian Interior Ministry said that Abdel Aziz had won the presidential election with 52.58 percent of the votes, surpassing the 50 percent threshold to win the presidency. In second place was Ahmed Ould Daddah who garnered 13.66 percent of the votes.

The 2014 election --

In 2014, Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, who led the coup that deposed the democratically elected President Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdellahi in 2008 and who was elected in 2009 under a cloud of accusations about the fairness of the vote, was seeking re-election. Aziz announced his candidacy for the presidential election set to take place on June 21, 2014. If no candidate secures more than 50 percent, the two top performers would face off in a run-off election to be held on July 5, 2014.

Opposition leaders complained that the vote would be another sham, since there was no agreement on the need for electoral reforms, and the existing political structure (specifically, the election commission) favored the incumbent president. As such, many political opposition heavyweights were boycotting the vote. That being said, there was a handful of opposition candidates who would be contesting the election; this group included the former Health Minister and leader of the Party for Democracy and Harmony (El Wiam), Bodiel Ould Houmeid; Biram Ould Dah Ould Abeid, an anti-slavery activist; Ibrahima Moctar Sarr, the leader of the Alliance for Justice and

Democracy / Movement for reconciliation (AJD/MR), and Mrs. Lalla Mariam Mint Moulaye Idriss.

On June 21, 2014, the election went forward in Mauritania amidst an opposition boycott. The vote count showed that President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz was decisively re-elected for another five-year term with close to 82 percent of the vote. This result ensured that there would be no need of a second round of voting.   Meanwhile, at least one rival candidate, Biram Ould Dah Ould Abeid, said he would challenge the result in court on the basis of vote-rigging.

Note on head of Government:
On Aug. 20, 2014, Mauritanian President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz appointed Yahya Ould Hademine as the country's new prime minister and charged him with forming a new government. Hademine succeeded outgoing Prime Minister Moulaye Ould Mohamed Laghdah who served as the head of government since 2008 but who resigned from office.

Cabinet:
Council of Ministers appointed by the prime minister

Legislative Branch:
Bicameral parliament (barlamane):
Consists of the Senate or Majlis al-Shuyukh (56 seats; 53 members elected by municipal leaders and 3 members elected by Mauritanians abroad to serve six-year terms; a portion of seats up for election every two years) and the National Assembly or Majlis al-Watani (146 seats; 106 members elected in single- and multi-member constituencies to serve five-year terms and 40 are elected nationwide through a closed list proportional representation system to serve five-year terms; of the 40 seats elected at the nationwide level, 20 are reserved for women)

Note on Senate Election of 2009:
Last held in 2009. Results as follows: seats by party - CPM (Coalition of Majority Parties) 45, COD (Coordination of Democratic Opposition) 7, RNRD-TAWASSOUL 4

Note on Senate elections expected to be held in 2014:
The next elections to the Senate in Mauritania were set to be held in 2014; however, this timeline for the polls passed by with authorities deciding to postpone the vote. At issue was an election boycott by the opposition. The government was hoping to engage in dialogue with the opposition and persuade them to participate in a forthcoming election to the Senate.

Primer on 2013 parliamentary elections:
Dec. 21, 2013, second round; first round held on Nov. 23, 2013 --

Parliamentary elections in Mauritania were set to be held in the rough November - December 2013 period. In Mauritania, the bicameral parliament (barlamane) consists of the Senate or Majlis al-Shuyukh (56 seats) and the National Assembly or Majlis al-Watani (146 seats). At stake in these elections in 2013 would be the seats in the National Assembly. The previous elections were held in 2006, with the following elections expected to be held in 2011. Those 2011 elections were rescheduled for 2012 and then postponed indefinitely. There were high hopes that the elections would finally go forward in 2013. To that end, a first round of voting was set for Nov. 23, 2014, and a second round was set for Dec. 7, 2013 although a later date of Dec. 21, 2013 was eventually advanced.

Note that on Nov. 23, 2013, voters in Mauritania went to polling stations across the country to vote in the first round of the parliamentary elections. At the time of writing, turnout was reported to be 60 percent and no final results were available. Still, the ruling Union for the Republic (UPR) appeared to have enjoyed a strong performance. Unofficial results indicated that the UPR secured the plurality out of the 121 seats in the first round; the remaining seats would be decided in the second round. Other major parties contesting the elections included the Islamist Tewassoul party, El Wiam, the People's Progressive Alliance, Union for Democracy and Progress, and a party linked with the Muslim Brotherhood.

On Dec. 21, 2013, voters returned to the polls to complete the voting process in the elections in Mauritania by voting in the second round. As expected, the ruling Union for the Republic (UPR) claimed victory. According to the country's Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), with the combined number of seats won in the two election rounds, the UPR secured 75 seats in total -- a clear majority in the parliament. The Islamists took a total of 16 seats, thus establishing them as the main opposition party in parliament. The El Wiam party won ten seats, while the People's Progressive Alliance took seven seats, Union for Democracy and Progress took six seats, and the party linked with the Muslim Brotherhood won four seats. The rest of the seats went to various other parties and political blocs.

Judicial Branch:
"Cour Supreme" (Supreme Court), Courts of Appeal, Special Islamic Court and lower courts

Constitution:
July 12, 1991; changes made most recently in 2006 to limit presidential terms

Legal System:
Based on Code of Law, subsequently modified to include modern law with Islamic (Shariah)

institutions and practices

Administrative Divisions:

13 regions (wilayas, singular - wilaya); Adrar, Assaba, Brakna, Dakhlet Nouadhibou, Gorgol, Guidimaka, Hodh ech Chargui, Hodh El Gharbi, Inchiri, Nouakchott, Tagant, Tiris Zemmour, Trarza

Political Parties and Leaders:

Alliance for Justice and Democracy/Movement for Renewal or AJD/MR [Ibrahima Moctar SARR]

Alternative or El-Badil [Mohamed Yahdhi Ould MOCTAR HACEN]

Coalition of Majority Parties or CPM (parties supporting the regime including PRDR, UPR, UDP, RD, HATEM-PMUC, UCD)

Coalition for Pacific Alternation or CAP (coalition of opposition parties, including APP, El Wiam, and Sawab)

Coordination of Democratic Opposition or COD [Ahmed Ould DADDAH] (coalition of 11 opposition political parties including RNRD-TAWASSOUL, RFD, UFP, PNDD-ADIL, Alternative or El-Badil)

Democratic Renewal or RD [Moustapha Ould ABDEIDARRAHMANE]

El Karama Party [Cheikhna Ould Mohamed Ould HAJBOU]

El Vadila Party [Ethmane Ould Ahmed ABOULMAALY]

El Wiam [Boidiel Ould HOUMEIT]

Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement (Biram Dah ABEID)

Mauritanian Party for Unity and Change or HATEM-PMUC [Saleh Ould HANENA] (Nasserist Arab Nationalists)

National Pact for Democracy and Development or PNDD-ADIL [Yahya Ould Ahmed El WAGHEF] (independents formerly supporting President ABDELLAHI)

National Rally for Freedom, Democracy and Equality or RNLDE

National Rally for Reform and Development or RNRD-TAWASSOUL [Mohamed Jamil MANSOUR] (moderate Islamists)

Party of Unity and Development or PUD [Mohamed BARO]

Popular Front or FP [Mohamed Lemine Ch'bih Ould CHEIKH MALAININE]

Popular Progressive Alliance or APP [Messaoud Ould BOULKHEIR]

Rally of Democratic Forces or RFD [Ahmed Ould DADDAH]

Ravah Party

Republican Party for Democracy and Renewal or PRDR [Mintata Mint HIDEID]

Sawab [Abdel Salem Ould HORMA] (Ba'athists)

Socialist and Democratic Unity Party or PUDS [Mahfouz Weld AZIZ]

Surge of Youth for the Nation [Lalla CHERIVA]

Union for Democracy and Progress or UDP [Naha Mint MOUKNASS]

Union for the Republic or UPR [Sidi Mohamed Ould MAHAM] (ruling party)
Union of Democratic Center or UCD [Cheikh Sid'Ahmed Ould BABA]
Union of the Forces for Progress or UFP [Mohamed Ould MAOULOUD]

Suffrage:
18 years of age; universal

Principal Government Officials

Cabinet and Leadership of Mauritania

Pres.   Mohamed Ould Abdel AZIZ
Prime Min.   Yahya Ould HADEMINE
Min. of Agriculture   Lemine Mint MEMA
Min. of Commerce, Industry, & Tourism   Naha Mint Hamdi Ould MOUKNASS
 Min. of Communications & Relations With Parliament   Izidbih Ould Mohamed MAHMOUD
Min. of Culture & Handicraft   Hindou Mint AININA
Min. of Economics & Development   Sidi Ould TAH
Min. of Education   Ba OUSMANE
Min. of Employment, Vocational Training, & New Technologies   Dia Moktar MALAL
Min. of Energy, Oil, & Mines   Mohamed Salem Ould BECHIR
Min. of Environment & Sustainable Development   Amedi CAMARA
Min. of Equipment & Transport   Mohamed Ould KOUNA
Min. of Finance   Mokhtar Ould DIAY
Min. of Fisheries & Maritime Economy   Nany Ould CHROUGHA
Min. of Foreign Affairs & Cooperation   Hamadi Ould MEIMOU
Min. of Habitat, Urban Affairs, & Territorial Admin.   Ismael Ould SADEGH
Min. of Health   Ammedou Ould Hademine Ould JELVOUNE
Min. of Higher Education & Scientific Research   Sidi Ould SALEM
Min. of Interior & Decentralization   Ahmedou Ould ABDALLAH
Min. of Islamic Affairs & Religious Education   Ahmed Ould Ehil DAOUD
Min. of Justice   Sidi Ould ZEINE
Min. of Livestock   Fatma Vall Mint SOUEINAE

Min. of National Defense   Diallo Amadou BATHIA

Min. of Public Services & Admin. Modernization   Seydina Aly Ould Mohamed KHOUNA

Min. of Relations With Parliament   Mohamed Lemine Ould CHEIKH

Min. of Social Affairs   Fatma Mint HABIB, Dr.

Min. of Water & Sanitation   Brahim Ould Mbareck Ould Mohamed MOHKTAR

Min. of Youth & Sports   Coumba BA

Min. of Sec. Gen. of the Govt.   Hawa TANDIA

Min.-Del. to the Min. of Foreign Affairs & Cooperation in Charge of Maghreb & African Affairs & Mauritanians Abroad   Khadijetou Mbareck FALL

Ambassador to the US   Mohamed Lemine El HAYCEN

Permanent Representative to the UN, New York   Sidi Mohamed Ould BOUBACAR

-- as of 2015

Leader Biography

Leader Biography

Editor's Note:

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The firing of four of Mauritania's top four military officials, along with the inclusion of politicians alleged to have corrupt inclinations in cabinet, appeared to have sparked this action. Also at issue was the government's overtures toward Islamic hardliners, which was not favorably viewed by the military leaders and led to friction with democratically-elected President Sidi Ould Cheikh

Abdallahi.

Reports from the capital of Nouakcott suggested that President Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi was being held by the renegade soldiers, Prime Minister Yahya Ould Ahmed Waqef had been detained, and that the new "state council" was in charge of the country. The Africa Union condemned the coup d'etat and demanded the return to constitutional order and legality.

The coup d'etat was led by one of a military chief -- General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz -- who was himself a key orchestrator of the previous coup in 2005, which drove the unpopular dictator, Maaouya Sid'Ahmed Ould Taya, from power. Abdel Aziz was elected in a 2009 vote viewed as "a charade" by opponents.

Nevertheless, days later, the Mauritanian Interior Ministry said that Abdelaziz had won the presidential election with 52.58 percent of the votes, surpassing the 50 percent threshold to win the presidency. In second place was Ahmed Ould Daddah who garnered 13.66 percent of the votes.

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Nevertheless, the Mauritanian Interior Ministry said that Abdel Aziz had won the presidential election with 52.58 percent of the votes, surpassing the 50 percent threshold to win the presidency. In second place was Ahmed Ould Daddah who garnered 13.66 percent of the votes.

The 2014 election --

In 2014, Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, who led the coup that deposed the democratically elected President Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdellahi in 2008 and who was elected in 2009 under a cloud of accusations about the fairness of the vote, was seeking re-election. Aziz announced his candidacy for the presidential election set to take place on June 21, 2014. If no candidate secures more than 50 percent, the two top performers would face off in a run-off election to be held on July 5, 2014.

Opposition leaders complained that the vote would be another sham, since there was no agreement on the need for electoral reforms, and the existing political structure (specifically, the election commission) favored the incumbent president. As such, many political opposition heavyweights

were boycotting the vote. That being said, there was a handful of opposition candidates who would be contesting the election; this group included the former Health Minister and leader of the Party for Democracy and Harmony (El Wiam), Bodiel Ould Houmeid; Biram Ould Dah Ould Abeid, an anti-slavery activist; Ibrahima Moctar Sarr, the leader of the Alliance for Justice and Democracy / Movement for reconciliation (AJD/MR), and Mrs. Lalla Mariam Mint Moulaye Idriss.

On June 21, 2014, the election went forward in Mauritania amidst an opposition boycott. The vote count showed that President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz was decisively re-elected for another five-year term with close to 82 percent of the vote. This result ensured that there would be no need of a second round of voting.   Meanwhile, at least one rival candidate, Biram Ould Dah Ould Abeid, said he would challenge the result in court on the basis of vote-rigging.

Foreign Relations

General Relations

Mauritania has a Permanent Mission to the United Nations.

Regional Relations

Between 1992 and 1996, Mauritania and Mali negotiated agreements on the repatriation of Mauritanian refugees and border demarcation. Similarly, in 1994, Mauritania and Senegal signed an agreement on the repatriation of refugees, and in 1995 signed an agreement on the free movement of goods and people between the countries. Also in 1995, Mauritania became involved in regional military cooperation agreements with Mali and Senegal. In 1996, further joint security measures were taken.

Relations with Senegal have always been tepid as the two countries have fought over water rights in the Senegal River Valley. While ties were normalized in recent years, they worsened again under the administration of Senegal's President Wade.

In May 2000, the Mauritanian government accused Wade of undermining Mauritanian national interests. This was in reference to a proposed irrigation project that would significantly restrict the flow of the Senegal River into Mauritania, jeopardizing its already limited agriculture. To further the blow, the Front for the Liberation of Mauritanian Africans, which had been declared non-grata in Senegal under former President Diouf, was recognized and given training and publicity by the Wade government..

Mauritania reacted by ordering the expulsion of the estimated 100,000 Senegalese nationals living in Mauritania. Under significant pressure from Senegal and the international community, Nouakchott rescinded the expulsion order on June 12 (15 days later). Wade visited Mauritania in June to address the problem. Senegal retracted its intended irrigation project and the first steps have now been taken to normalizing Mauritanian-Senegalese relations once again.

In May 1999, two Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) diplomatic officials were expelled from the country. This action was related to then-DRC President Laurent Kabila's efforts to recall ambassadors appointed by former dictator Mobutu Sese Seko.

Relations With Regional Bodies

In December 1999 Mauritania pulled out of the ECOWAS (Economic Commission of West African States). The stated reason was concern over the move towards unified currency.

In April 1999, Mauritania and Tunisia held a joint commission to establish accords covering commerce, education, fishing, health and tourism. The delegates expressed the need to restructure the Maghreb Arab Union in order to integrate the member countries to better confront the issues of economic globalization. The member countries of the Maghreb Arab Union are Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania and Tunisia. Mauritania's relationship with key Maghreb states could be challenged in 2001 as its ties with the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic, or SADR, continue to strengthen. Morocco does not recognize the independence of the SADR government and considers Western Sahara to be a Moroccan territory.

At its July 2-11, 2001, meeting in Lusaka, Zambia, the Organization of African Unity officially approved the transformation of the Organization of African Unity into the new African Union. Former foreign minister of Cote d'Ivoire, Amara Essy, was elected the first Secretary-General of the Africa Union. United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, reacted with the statement that, "This historic effort will require leadership, courage and willingness to depart from the ways of the past, if it is to do for Africa what the European Union has done for Europe."

The goal of the African Union is to be a continental body that will pave the way to a better life for

all Africans. Where the OAU was criticized for its lack of action on economic and social fronts, the African Union is charged with development as its primary task. Following a model based on the European Union, the African Union is intended to bridge the economic gaps between African countries and thrust the continent onto the world economic stage as a single entity. The African Union Bill was based on a convergence of South African president Thabo Mbeki's African development plan, and the Plan Omega proposed by Senegalese president Abdoulaye Wade. It therefore adds to its economic mandate the political mandate that all of Africa should seek democratic consolidation.

There are significant criticisms to the new African Union, though. Some fear that too much faith is being placed in a document that makes more sense in theory than in practice. The strongest criticism, however, is that the African Union's largest force has been Libyan President Muammar al-Qadhafi. The U.S. has made its objections to the Union clear no doubt due to a lack of faith in Qadhafi's motives. Many African leaders backed the Union even though they also demonstrated a lack of trust in Qadhafi's motives.

At the opening of the meeting of the OAU leaders noted that Qadhafi failed to even mention Africa's founding fathers even though it was Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah who was the founder of pan-Africanism some forty years ago. Indeed, Qadhafi has backed groups that are markedly anti-pan-Africanist in his own country. Other comments challenged the controversial role Libyan nationals often play in sub-Saharan African countries. Yet the most controversial position of Qadhafi no doubt was his statement that "We cannot be neutral here. We are here for the Africans, not the Europeans. We are here for the blacks, not for the whites." With Louis Farrakhan, leader of the U.S.-based Nation of Islam movement, standing behind him, this statement was taken as an affront to increased western relations as opposed to the Union's goal of increasing economic ties with wealthier countries.

Multilateral Relations and International Aid

Since 1992 Mauritania has worked hard to rectify its economic structure. Poverty indicators are high, as reflected in low human development rates by the United Nations Development Programme, but economic growth has been strong and constant.

The substantial progress Mauritania has made in consolidating is macroeconomic structure, the positive tax reform and the successful financial stabilization measures has attracted the World Bank. By the end of July 1999 the World Bank had increased its Mauritanian investment to $728 million. The IMF has been equally impressed and has been instrumental in easing fiscal austerity measures and promoting an increase in foreign exchange.

Both the World Bank and the IMF have noted that given the steady economic increase of the

country over the past eight years, the greatest economic problem facing Mauritania isn't the generation of new capital. The greatest challenge is that most of the population still does not feel this economic growth.

The World Bank goal for 2000 was thus to help Mauritania build a broad-based, participatory poverty reduction strategy. The World Bank expected that under their consultation the Mauritanian government would finalize a poverty reduction strategy and begin implementation sometime in 2001. Critics argued that the government was not fully committed to the poverty reduction plan as they currently benefit from the current stratified society. Marked reductions in poverty recorded over several years, as well as signs of economic growth in 2001, however, led to over $1 billion USD in debt forgiveness in 2002.

On June 11, 2005, at a pre-G8 summit meeting in London, world leaders agreed to write off $40 billion in debt owed by the world's poorest countries. Under the plan, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the African Development Fund would write off 100 percent of the money owed to them by 18 countries. In about a year to 18 months, another nine countries would also benefit from debt relief. Then, eleven other countries would be eligible for such relief, provided that they successfully dealt with corruption and met targets for good governance. With those additional two phases, the entire plan would involve $55 billion in debt relief.

The countries benefiting immediately from the plan expressed gratitude that they would no longer be saddled with debilitating debt and that they could, instead, work toward economic development. Anti-poverty activists also expressed support for the plan but said that more countries should also be able to benefit.

With the plan for debt relief agreed upon, British Prime Minister Tony Blair traveled to Moscow on June 12, 2005 for another meeting in a series of pre-G8 summit talks with world leaders. On the agenda were matters such as African aid and development, as well as transnational measures to deal with climate change. The United Kingdom, which holds the presidency of the G8 grouping of the world's eight wealthiest countries, was hoping to advance a significant increase in developmental aid to help benefit the world's most impoverished countries, especially in Africa.

Mauritania was one of twenty-seven countries, which were eligible for debt relief under the HIPC (highly-indebted poor countries initiative).

Other Significant Relations

From 1960 to 1967, the United States maintained cordial relations with Mauritania and provided a small amount of economic assistance. During the June 1967 Middle East war, Mauritania broke diplomatic and consular relations with the United States but restored ties 2 years later and

maintained relatively friendly relations until the late 1980s, despite disagreement over the Arab-Israeli issue. Since 1981, the United States has provided about $130 million in economic and food assistance.

The 1989 rupture between Mauritania and Senegal (the "1989 Events") that resulted in Mauritania's deportation to Senegal of tens of thousands of its own citizens, negatively affected U.S.-Mauritanian relations. Moreover, Mauritania's perceived support of Iraq prior to and during the 1991 Gulf war further weakened the strained ties.

Relations between the U.S. and Mauritania reached a low in the spring of 1991, as details of the Mauritanian military's role in widespread human rights abuses surfaced. The U.S. responded by formally halting USAID operations and all military assistance to Mauritania. Relations also suffered in the 1990s as a result of repeated reports that slavery continued in some parts of Mauritania despite legal proscriptions.

Since late 1991, the Mauritanian government has expressed a desire to restore good relations with the United States. It has implemented democratic reforms such as the legalization of political parties, a free press and presidential and legislative elections. The government has also improved its overall performance on human rights. The prospects for increasing U.S. military and development assistance to Mauritania hinge on Mauritania's continued progress on human rights. Relations with the U.S. also improved with the establishment of diplomatic ties between Mauritania and Israel in 1999. Mauritania's cooperation with the U.S.-led coalition against terrorism formed after the September 11, 2001, attacks against the U.S. will likely also lead to increased U.S. assistance.

On the matter of Mauritania's perceived support of Iraq during the Gulf War, Mauritanian-Iraqi relations have been severely curtailed since pro-Iraqi Baathist activists were alleged to have been involved in a foiled attempt to overthrow the Mauritanian government. In late 1995, the Iraqi ambassador in Mauritania was considered "persona non grata," and his expulsion was demanded.

The United States Government has condemned the August 2005 coup and the unconstitutional assumption of power by the Military Council for Justice and Democracy, and has called for a return to a constitutional government through free and fair elections as soon as possible.

In October 1999, Mauritania established diplomatic ties with Israel. While this went a long way to improving relations with the U.S., it forced a severe and rapid deterioration of Mauritanian-Iraqi relations. Iraq increased support for the pro-Iraqi Baath Party - the Vanguard Party of Mauritania - and called for an increase in terrorist acts against the Mauritanian government. Mauritania responded by recalling its ambassador to Iraq. A 2003 attempted coup d'etat in Mauritania has been linked to disatisfaction among certain elements of Mauritanian society with the government's recognition of the state of Israel.   The 2005 coup d'etat that ousted President Taya from office was likewise associated with Mauritania's ties with Israel.

Supplementary sources: the World Bank, the IMF, Lexis-Nexis, Reliefweb, the BBC, AllAfrica.com.

National Security

External Threats

No nation poses an immediate threat to Mauritania's national security. Mauritania officially maintains a longstanding territorial claim to neighboring Western Sahara, but has not pressed the issue in recent years (also see below section on insurgencies).

Crime

Mauritaniahas a moderate crime rate has been steadily increasing in recent years. Theft is fairly prevalent in the nation's major urban centers and towns. Burglaries, robberies, rapes, and assaults occur, albeit more infrequently.

Insurgencies

At present, there are no insurgent movements operating inside or outside of Mauritaniathat directly threaten its government or general population. Mauritaniadid fight a territorial war against a guerilla force in the late 1970s. Likewise, it has experienced tumultuous political conditions since it became a self-governing state in 1960.

In 1976, Mauritania 's annexed a third of Spanish Sahara (now known as Western Sahara), earning the enmity of the rebel movement known as the Polisario Front. After three years of fighting, it withdrew from the region. Though the government of Mauritania maintains its territorial claim to Western Sahara, it has not pressed the matter in recent years. The Polisario Front remains active, fighting a guerilla war against Morocco, which has occupied Western Sahara since 1975.

Though no other insurgent movements have threatened Mauritania 's national security, a host of factors have conspired to undermine political stability there since it received its independence from

Francein November 1960. A tendency towards autocracy has fostered popular discontent, which in turn has led to abrupt turnovers in administrations and political violence. Moktar Ould Daddah became the country's first president. He remained in office until a bloodless coup fostered his departure in July 1978. Another head of state, President Maaouya Ould Sid Ahmed Taya, initially came to power after orchestrating a coup in 1984. He won subsequent national elections in 1992 and 1997. In June 2003, a group of current and former military offers attempted to oust Taya through violent means. The architects of the failed coup are still at large. For all practical purposes, despite the constitutional guarantee of a democratic system, Mauritaniaremains a one-party state; Taya retained the presidency since the introduction of multiparty elections in 1991 - through questionable means, many believe, until a successful coup d'etat in 2005.

In 2005, that coup d'etat led by Colonel Ely Ould Mohamed Vall resulted in the installation of an interim government, changes to the constitution including term limits of two years for presidents, as well as an improved human rights situation, and the institution of democracy. Presidential elections moved the country on the path of democratization in 2007. Another military coup d'etat in 2008 returned the country to a state of "rule by junta." As in the "Political Conditions," a forum known as the National Dialogue recommending returning the country to civilian rule via elections that ensued in 2009.

In addition to the general absence of political plurality, ethnic tension has contributed to tumultuous conditions in Mauritania. Ethnic identity in Mauritaniais a somewhat complicated matter. The two main groups - the Moors and the Sub-Saharan population - clashed violently in 1989. Moors are of mixed Arab and Berber descent. However, there are black Moors, with ancestral roots in Sudan, and white Moors. Tension between white Moors, black Moors, and non-Moors persists in Mauritaniaand remains an obstacle to national unity. Thus, although no active insurgent movement poses an immediate threat to Mauritania, specific conditions there -- namely strong internal opposition to the central government and ethnic tension -- contribute to the risk of future insurrection.

Terrorism

On June 4, 2005, a group of terrorists, believed to be affiliated with Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), (an Islamic Extremist group with ties to Al-Qaida) attacked a desert military base and killed 15, wounded 17 and two others are reported missing. Five of the approximately 150 attackers were killed and the others are being hunted by both Mauritian and Malian forces.

The United States (U.S.) Department of State does report the presence of Islamic extremism and anti-American sentiment there. Their presence has served as preconditions for recent terrorist violence in Africa, including the 1998 twin bombings of U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya, as well as other regions of the world.

The State Department indicates that Mauritania's central government carefully monitors the activities of religious extremists there.   U.S. intervention in Iraq sparked manifestations of anti-American sentiments, including demonstrations outside the U.S. embassy in Nouakchott.

Update on Terrorism

In August 2009, a suicide bombing ensued at the French embassy in the capital city of Nouakchott; the notorious terrorism enclave, al-Qaida in North Africa, claimed responsibility. Months later in December 2009, al-Qaida claimed responsibility, first, for the abduction of two Spanish aid workers, and second, for the kidnapping of two Italians. The situation spurred Mauritania to join forces in April 2010 with other countries in North Africa - Mali, Nigeria and Algeria -- to create a joint command, aimed with tackling the threat of terrorism from al-Qaida in the region. On the heels of that move, mid-2010 saw Mauritania adopt new anti-terrorism legislation aimed at tackling al-Qaida; the law offered security forces greater powers to deal with suspected terrorists.   By August 2010, the two aforementioned Spanish aid workers kidnapped by al-Qaida were released in Mali. A month later in September 2010, the Mauritanian military carried out strikes against suspected al-Qaeda militants in Mali. The strokes ensued after authorities tracked militants believed to have abducted several foreign nationals in Niger cross into Mali's territory.

In February 2011, an apparent plot by suspected members of the al-Qaida North African faction was thwarted in Mauritania when soldiers opened fired on a car packed with explosives outside the capital of Nouakchott. Military forces had been tracking the convoy of three cars as they traveled from Mali and made their way to Mauritania. The shooting resulted in injuries to seven soldiers and the deaths of three suspects, who were believed to have been en route to carrying out an attack in Noakchott. A fourth suspect was taken in custody, while a fifth suspect traveling in the convoy were being sought. In an interview with the Associated Press, Colonel Mohamed Ould Ahmed, said: "The car was transporting three terrorists trying to infiltrate the capital by launching a kamikaze attack."

The al-Qaida North African faction is known as Islamic Mahgreb (AQIM) and emerged in 2007 from the Algerian militant group, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC). The reconstituted AQIM quickly allied itself with Osama Bin Laden's notorious terror enclave, spurring several Saharan countries -- Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Algeria -- to establish a joint military effort centered in Algeria, and tasked with fighting the terror threat from AQIM. The group has been blamed for a series of ambushes, kidnappings, and terror attacks in Algeria in recent times, but has become more active across the northern part of Africa and into the Sahara.

Note:

Mauritania is party to seven of the twelve international conventions and protocols pertaining to terrorism.

Defense Forces

Military Data

Military Branches:

Mauritanian Armed Forces: Army, Mauritanian Navy (Marine Mauritanienne; includes naval infantry), Islamic Republic of Mauritania Air Group (Groupement Aerienne Islamique de Mauritanie, GAIM)

Eligible age to enter service:

18 voluntary

Mandatory Service Terms:

No conscription

Manpower in general population-fit for military service:
males age 16-49: 480,042
females age 16-49: 581,473

Manpower reaching eligible age annually:
male: 36,116

female: 36,826

Military Expenditures-Percent of GDP:

N/A

Chapter 3

Economic Overview

Economic Overview

Overview

Mauritania is one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world, with most of its land covered by the Sahara desert. The country is highly dependent on a few sources of growth, namely mining, fishing and agriculture, making the economy vulnerable to fluctuations in world commodity prices and other shocks such as adverse weather conditions. Crude oil reserves were discovered in various offshore oil fields in 2001, and oil production and export started in February 2006.

The successful organization of Mauritania's first fair and free presidential elections in 2007 encouraged foreign investors and generated strong donor support. After 15 months in power, however, President Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi was overthrown in August 2008 by a military coup led by General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz. This domestic political crisis led to a significant reduction in external assistance, while the global economic crisis further weakened Mauritania's fiscal and external positions. As a result, economic performance deteriorated sharply in 2008 and 2009. Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz was elected president in July 2009, and the peaceful completion of the presidential election has established a strong basis for resumption of the reform agenda and the financial support from the international community. In March 2010, the IMF approved a three-year Extended Credit Facility arrangement with Mauritania to support the government's policies for sustaining high and diversified growth, boosting employment, and further reducing poverty. Improved foreign demand and a recovery in non-extractive sectors boosted real GDP growth in 2010. Inflation was contained despite higher commodities prices. The mining sector's export performance helped improve the current account balance and to consolidate international reserves. But unemployment remained high. Growth was favorable in the first half of 2011 despite the unfavorable performance of the agriculture sector. By year's end, though, the Red Cross was warning that more than a million people could face severe food shortages in early 2012. Drought and rising prices severely reduced the availability of food for many. It was estimated that nearly 840,000 people faced food shortages as of November 2011.

Overall, since 2010, Mauritania has seen high growth. In 2012, the main growth drivers were agriculture, following good rainfall, and particularly construction and public works. Both sectors recorded increases in volume in 2012 of 39.6 percent and 23.3 percent, respectively. Fishing also performed well, with growth of 14.8 percent. However, the difficult global situation the mining

industry, particularly iron, which is the country's main export. Despite favorable economic conditions, the country still suffers from high poverty and high unemployment. Also, the crisis in Mali and the influx of refugees risk undermining the relative social and political stability of the country. Mauritania's economic performance in 2013 remained strong driven by the expansion in mining and agricultural sectors. Inflation was contained and import prices declined.

In September 2014, Mauritania's public service minister announced the country would switch to a Monday-to-Friday workweek from Sunday-to-Thursday to align its business practices with international partners and improve competitiveness. The new schedule was to take effect on October 1. The majority Muslim nation observes Friday as a holy day, like other Muslim nations. The public service minister said it was clear that the country's economy was suffering "huge losses" by not being on par with its trading partners.

Despite poor international conditions, notably a sharp drop in the price of iron – the economy grew strongly in 2014, the third year in a row that it has been above 5 percent, according to the African Development Bank.
The short and medium-term outlook remained good, thanks to satisfactory macroeconomic policies, structural reforms, increased public investment and plans for greater production capacity in the extractive sector.

Economic Performance

With the start of oil production, real GDP growth soared in 2006. Because of persistent technical difficulties, however, oil production declined sharply in 2007, contributing to a significant slowdown of GDP growth. Nevertheless, non-oil GDP growth increased in 2007, benefiting from a rebound in agricultural production and the development of new mining projects. Reflecting the impact of both domestic political crisis and the global economic crisis, non-oil GDP growth declined in 2008 and turned negative in 2009, while oil output continued to fall. However, the economy returned to growth in 2010 and has continued to perform well since.

 According to CountryWatch estimated calculations for 2014:

Real GDP growth rate was: 4.6 percent
The fiscal deficit/surplus as percent of GDP (%) was: 2.7 percent
Inflation was measured at: 3.9 percent

Updated in 2015

*Please note that the figures in our Economic Performance section are estimates or forecasts based on IMF-based data that are formulated using CountryWatch models of analysis.

Supplementary Sources: Agence France Presse, African Development Bank Group and International Monetary Fund

Nominal GDP and Components

Nominal GDP and Components					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Nominal GDP (LCU billions)	1,440.20	1,437.17	1,520.77	1,533.54	1,518.41
Nominal GDP Growth Rate (%)	20.340	-0.2100	5.817	0.8393	-0.9865
Consumption (LCU billions)	680.355	762.478	832.103	889.150	987.643
Government Expenditure (LCU billions)	252.430	281.297	308.799	324.297	360.220
Gross Capital Formation (LCU billions)	579.126	806.529	740.393	664.133	558.030
Exports of Goods & Services (LCU billions)	839.233	830.992	847.798	733.055	699.760
Imports of Goods & Services (LCU billions)	910.948	1,244.12	1,208.32	1,077.10	1,087.24

Population and GDP Per Capita

Population and GDP Per Capita					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Population, total (million)	3.369	3.454	3.537	3.621	3.706
Population growth (%)	2.557	2.523	2.403	2.375	2.347
Nominal GDP per Capita (LCU 1000s)	427,484.90	416,089.44	429,961.60	423,512.19	409,716.41

Real GDP and Inflation

Real GDP and Inflation					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Real Gross Domestic Product (LCU billions 2005 base)	707.887	750.141	786.662	846.066	880.548
Real GDP Growth Rate (%)	4.386	5.969	4.868	7.552	4.076
GDP Deflator (2005=100.0)	203.450	191.587	193.320	181.255	172.439
Inflation, GDP Deflator (%)	15.284	-5.8309	0.9045	-6.2409	-4.8639

Government Spending and Taxation

Government Spending and Taxation					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Government Fiscal Budget (billions)	323.972	429.956	436.742	479.104	472.523
Fiscal Budget Growth Rate (percentage)	20.433	32.714	1.578	9.700	-1.3736
National Tax Rate Net of Transfers (%)	22.501	32.398	27.793	27.649	30.071
Government Revenues Net of Transfers (LCU billions)	324.064	465.611	422.663	424.007	456.601
Government Surplus(-) Deficit(+) (LCU billions)	0.0920	35.655	-14.0790	-55.0970	-15.9220
Government Surplus(+) Deficit(-) (%GDP)	0.0064	2.481	-0.9258	-3.5928	-1.0486

Money Supply, Interest Rates and Unemployment

Money Supply, Interest Rates and Unemployment					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Money and Quasi-Money (M2) (LCU billions)	375.550	415.108	458.831	507.160	502.157
Money Supply Growth Rate (%)	21.624	10.533	10.533	10.533	-0.9865
Lending Interest Rate (%)	17.000	17.000	10.142	9.204	14.168
Unemployment Rate (%)	9.382	10.100	10.065	10.013	9.139

Foreign Trade and the Exchange Rate

Foreign Trade and the Exchange Rate					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Official Exchange Rate (LCU/$US)	280.412	296.937	294.552	301.818	324.654
Trade Balance NIPA ($US billions)	-0.2557	-1.3913	-1.2240	-1.1399	-1.1935
Trade Balance % of GDP	-4.9795	-28.7460	-23.7064	-22.4346	-25.5191
Total Foreign Exchange Reserves ($US billions)	0.5023	0.9686	1.868	3.602	0.9436

Data in US Dollars

Data in US Dollars					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Nominal GDP ($US billions)	5.136	4.840	5.163	5.081	4.677
Exports ($US billions)	2.993	2.799	2.878	2.429	2.155
Imports ($US billions)	3.249	4.190	4.102	3.569	3.349

Energy Consumption and Production Standard Units

Energy Consumption and Production Standard Units					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Petroleum Consumption (TBPD)	12.805	12.805	12.800	13.170	13.464
Petroleum Production (TBPD)	7.739	6.533	6.729	5.869	5.784
Petroleum Net Exports (TBPD)	-5.0665	-6.2724	-6.0713	-7.3009	-7.6799
Natural Gas Consumption (bcf)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Natural Gas Production (bcf)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Natural Gas Net Exports (bcf)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Coal Consumption (1000s st)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Coal Production (1000s st)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Coal Net Exports (1000s st)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Nuclear Production (bil kwh)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Hydroelectric Production (bil kwh)	0.1300	0.1350	0.1411	0.1470	0.1531
Renewables Production (bil kwh)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

Energy Consumption and Production QUADS

Energy Consumption and Production QUADS					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Petroleum Consumption (Quads)	0.0273	0.0273	0.0273	0.0281	0.0287
Petroleum Production (Quads)	0.0165	0.0140	0.0144	0.0128	0.0099
Petroleum Net Exports (Quads)	-0.0108	-0.0133	-0.0129	-0.0153	-0.0189
Natural Gas Consumption (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Natural Gas Production (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Natural Gas Net Exports (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Coal Consumption (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Coal Production (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Coal Net Exports (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Nuclear Production (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Hydroelectric Production (Quads)	0.0013	0.0014	0.0014	0.0015	0.0015
Renewables Production (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

World Energy Price Summary

World Energy Price Summary					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Petroleum-WTI ($/bbl)	95.054	94.159	97.943	93.112	48.709
Natural Gas-Henry Hub ($/mmbtu)	3.999	2.752	3.729	4.369	2.614
Coal Thermal-Australian ($/mt)	121.448	96.364	84.562	70.130	57.511

CO2 Emissions

CO2 Emissions					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Petroleum Based (mm mt C)	0.6108	0.6108	0.6106	0.6282	0.6423
Natural Gas Based (mm mt C)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Coal Based (mm mt C)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Total CO2 Emissions (mm mt C)	0.6108	0.6108	0.6106	0.6282	0.6423

Agriculture Consumption and Production

Agriculture Consumption and Production					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Corn Total Consumption (1000 metric tons)	11.736	26.959	12.069	17.536	16.303
Corn Production (1000 metric tons)	11.587	18.942	9.959	15.229	14.194
Corn Net Exports (1000 metric tons)	-0.1485	-8.0168	-2.1097	-2.3070	-2.1095
Soybeans Total Consumption (1000 metric tons)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Soybeans Production (1000 metric tons)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Soybeans Net Exports (1000 metric tons)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Rice Total Consumption (1000 metric tons)	161.100	243.011	202.002	215.003	194.723
Rice Production (1000 metric tons)	161.185	242.996	201.911	214.915	211.679

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Rice Net Exports (1000 metric tons)	0.0841	-0.0148	-0.0902	-0.0875	16.956
Coffee Total Consumption (metric tons)	13.000	17.000	40.000	56.759	54.054
Coffee Production (metric tons)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Coffee Net Exports (metric tons)	-13.0000	-17.0000	-40.0000	-56.7593	-54.0544
Cocoa Beans Total Consumption (metric tons)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Cocoa Beans Production (metric tons)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Cocoa Beans Net Exports (metric tons)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Wheat Total Consumption (1000 metric tons)	295.481	522.362	382.118	402.430	342.693
Wheat Production (1000 metric tons)	2.882	2.815	2.895	3.000	2.591
Wheat Net Exports (1000 metric tons)	-292.5994	-519.5472	-379.2225	-399.4301	-340.1025

World Agriculture Pricing Summary

World Agriculture Pricing Summary					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Corn Pricing Summary ($/metric ton)	291.684	298.417	259.389	192.881	169.750
Soybeans Pricing Summary ($/metric ton)	540.667	591.417	538.417	491.771	390.417
Rice Pricing Summary ($/metric ton)	458.558	525.071	473.989	425.148	386.033
Coffee Pricing Summary ($/kilogram)	5.976	4.111	3.076	4.424	3.526
Cocoa Beans Pricing Summary ($/kilogram)	2.980	2.392	2.439	3.062	3.135
Wheat Pricing Summary ($/metric ton)	316.264	313.242	312.248	284.895	203.177

Metals Consumption and Production

Metals Consumption and Production					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Copper Consumption (1000 mt)	0.5670	8.660	16.754	25.000	22.085
Copper Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Copper Net Exports (1000 mt)	-0.5670	-8.6605	-16.7540	-25.0000	-22.0849
Zinc Consumption (1000 mt)	785.910	1,052.55	475.354	1,043.31	952.612
Zinc Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Zinc Exports (1000 mt)	-785.9100	-1052.5540	-475.3540	-1043.3090	-952.6118
Lead Consumption (1000 mt)	0.2400	0.1800	0.3000	0.2400	0.2400
Lead Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Lead Exports (1000 mt)	-0.2400	-0.1800	-0.3000	-0.2400	-0.2400

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Tin Consumption (1000 mt)	0.0524	0.0524	0.0524	0.0524	0.0524
Tin Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Tin Exports (1000 mt)	-0.0524	-0.0524	-0.0524	-0.0524	-0.0524
Nickel Consumption (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Nickel Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Nickel Exports (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Gold Consumption (kg)	1,351.97	1,332.24	1,242.55	1,334.31	1,192.85
Gold Production (kg)	8,801.90	8,260.65	10,172.92	10,679.06	10,711.84
Gold Exports (kg)	7,449.93	6,928.40	8,930.37	9,344.75	9,518.99
Silver Consumption (mt)	112.500	112.500	2.000	18.000	15.076
Silver Production (mt)	26.309	27.606	28.052	29.030	26.679
Silver Exports (mt)	-86.1906	-84.8945	26.052	11.030	11.603

World Metals Pricing Summary

World Metals Pricing Summary					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Copper ($/mt)	8,828.19	7,962.35	7,332.10	6,863.40	5,510.46
Zinc ($/mt)	2,193.90	1,950.41	1,910.26	2,160.97	1,931.68
Tin ($/mt)	26,053.68	21,125.99	22,282.80	21,898.87	16,066.63
Lead ($/mt)	2,400.81	2,064.64	2,139.79	2,095.46	1,787.82
Nickel ($/mt)	22,910.36	17,547.55	15,031.80	16,893.38	11,862.64
Gold ($/oz)	1,569.21	1,669.52	1,411.46	1,265.58	1,160.66
Silver ($/oz)	35.224	31.137	23.850	19.071	15.721

Economic Performance Index

Economic Performance Index

The Economic Performance rankings are calculated by CountryWatch's editorial team, and are based on criteria including sustained economic growth, monetary stability, current account deficits, budget surplus, unemployment and structural imbalances. Scores are assessed from 0 to 100 using this aforementioned criteria as well as CountryWatch's proprietary economic research data and models.

	Bank stability risk	Monetary/ Currency stability	Government Finances	Empl./ Unempl.	Econ.GNP growth or decline/ forecast
	0 - 100	0 - 100	0 - 100	0 - 100	%
North Americas					
Canada	92	69	35	38	3.14%
United States	94	76	4	29	3.01%
Western Europe					
Austria	90	27	30	63	1.33%
Belgium	88	27	19	23	1.15%
Cyprus	81	91	16	80	-0.69%
Denmark	97	70	45	78	1.20%
Finland	89	27	41	33	1.25%

France	87	27	18	27	1.52%
Germany	86	27	22	21	1.25%
Greece	79	27	5	24	-2.00%
Iceland	90	17	2	34	-3.04%
Italy	85	27	37	24	0.84%
Ireland	92	27	11	10	-1.55%
Luxembourg	99	27	28	66	2.08%
Malta	77	27	41	51	0.54%
Netherlands	91	27	26	74	1.30%
Norway	98	44	10	76	1.08%
Portugal	77	27	13	20	0.29%
Spain	83	27	9	3	-0.41%
Sweden	94	72	54	32	1.23%
Switzerland	97	86	55	77	1.53%
United Kingdom	85	12	9	37	1.34%
Central and Eastern Europe					
Albania	44	60	33	6	2.30%
Armenia	45	59	49	30	1.80%

Azerbaijan	56	4	84	99	2.68%
Belarus	59	21	83	98	2.41%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	34	68	69	N/A	0.50%
Bulgaria	58	75	88	49	0.20%
Croatia	69	68	94	9	0.18%
Czech Republic	80	89	29	70	1.67%
Estonia	72	90	66	92	0.80%
Georgia	36	60	53	56	2.00%
Hungary	70	66	26	54	-0.16%
Latvia	67	100	65	44	-3.97%
Lithuania	65	91	87	79	-1.65%
Macedonia (FYR)	53	69	56	2	2.03%
Moldova	23	36	81	67	2.50%
Poland	74	74	38	12	2.72%
Romania	62	56	70	62	0.75%
Russia	73	18	90	8	4.00%
Serbia	48	49	52	5	1.97%

Montenegro	39	27	73	1	-1.70%
Slovak Republic	80	62	30	14	4.06%
Slovenia	81	27	36	65	1.12%
Ukraine	41	11	57	N/A	3.68%
Africa					
Algeria	57	18	96	7	4.55%
Angola	49	1	97	N/A	7.05%
Benin	19	91	20	N/A	3.22%
Botswana	68	58	76	N/A	6.33%
Burkina Faso	16	91	13	N/A	4.41%
Burundi	2	91	6	N/A	3.85%
Cameroon	26	91	91	N/A	2.58%
Cape Verde	52	87	4	N/A	4.96%
Central African Republic	9	91	32	N/A	3.18%
Chad	22	91	89	N/A	4.42%
Congo	52	87	87	N/A	12.13%
Côte d'Ivoire	25	91	82	28	2.98%
Dem. Republic					

Congo	4	91	47	N/A	5.44%
Djibouti	31	76	50	N/A	4.47%
Egypt	37	20	24	69	5.01%
Equatorial Guinea	82	91	85	N/A	0.94%
Eritrea	1	3	1	18	1.81%
Ethiopia	6	45	8	N/A	6.96%
Gabon	64	91	96	N/A	5.36%
Gambia	8	48	86	N/A	4.82%
Ghana	9	11	69	N/A	4.50%
Guinea	10	7	91	N/A	3.03%
Guinea-Bissau	5	91	46	N/A	3.47%
Kenya	20	41	59	N/A	4.11%
Lesotho	13	40	12	N/A	2.98%
Liberia	12	73	74	N/A	5.92%
Libya	73	2	94	N/A	5.22%
Madagascar	4	22	24	N/A	-1.02%
Malawi	7	25	55	N/A	5.96%
Mali	20	91	82	N/A	5.12%

Mauritania	15	13	93	N/A	4.58%
Mauritius	65	52	56	55	4.10%
Morocco	37	72	48	26	3.23%
Mozambique	12	23	71	N/A	6.45%
Namibia	40	39	62	N/A	1.70%
Niger	10	91	21	N/A	4.41%
Nigeria	30	6	61	N/A	6.98%
Rwanda	21	40	68	N/A	5.39%
Sao Tome & Principe	1	61	100	N/A	3.40%
Senegal	24	91	63	N/A	3.44%
Seychelles	60	67	97	N/A	4.01%
Sierra Leone	5	10	39	N/A	4.77%
Somalia	2	38	59	N/A	3.19%
South Africa	61	37	70	N/A	2.59%
Sudan	16	5	73	N/A	5.52%
Swaziland	32	44	79	N/A	1.09%
Tanzania	15	45	32	N/A	6.17%
Togo	8	91	92	N/A	2.56%

Tunisia	50	61	44	39	4.00%
Uganda	11	17	54	N/A	5.59%
Zambia	29	20	49	N/A	5.84%
Zimbabwe	0	8	16	N/A	2.24%
South and Central America					
Argentina	66	3	80	36	3.50%
Belize	47	76	80	N/A	1.00%
Bolivia	32	51	61	81	3.99%
Brazil	71	47	78	11	5.50%
Chile	78	25	92	73	4.72%
Columbia	47	52	34	47	2.25%
Costa Rica	60	42	39	57	3.45%
Ecuador	43	76	75	64	2.51%
El Salvador	35	76	67	N/A	1.04%
Guatemala	46	59	58	N/A	2.52%
Honduras	27	47	58	N/A	2.00%
Mexico	69	42	52	61	4.07%
Nicaragua	23	49	42	N/A	1.75%

Panama	66	76	72	45	5.00%
Paraguay	35	46	66	16	5.27%
Peru	59	66	75	22	6.33%
Suriname	58	26	81	59	4.02%
Uruguay	70	26	27	N/A	5.71%
Venezuela	55	1	28	13	-2.63%
Caribbean					
Antigua & Barbuda	72	76	15	N/A	-2.01%
Bahamas	74	76	45	87	-0.50%
Barbados	67	76	33	15	-0.50%
Bermuda	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Cuba	45	76	18	95	0.25%
Dominica	53	76	65	N/A	1.40%
Dominican Republic	54	39	43	4	3.50%
Grenada	63	76	48	N/A	0.80%
Guyana	28	56	17	N/A	4.36%
Haiti	11	27	89	N/A	-8.50%
Jamaica	42	9	85	19	-0.28%

St Lucia	55	76	67	N/A	1.14%
St Vincent & Grenadines	49	76	95	N/A	0.50%
Trinidad & Tobago	82	37	77	72	2.13%
Middle East					
Bahrain	84	76	62	91	3.48%
Iran	51	19	40	58	3.01%
Iraq	48	9	8	N/A	7.27%
Israel	87	62	12	48	3.20%
Jordan	41	51	3	N/A	4.10%
Kuwait	96	4	99	N/A	3.10%
Lebanon	63	54	2	N/A	6.00%
Oman	76	16	88	N/A	4.71%
Qatar	99	16	83	N/A	18.54%
Saudi Arabia	76	8	98	N/A	3.70%
Syria	61	24	40	N/A	5.00%
Turkey	75	23	27	60	5.20%
United Arab Emirates	96	24	98	94	1.29%

Yemen	28	2	78	N/A	7.78%
Asia					
Afghanistan	17	70	74	N/A	8.64%
Bangladesh	13	43	25	N/A	5.38%
Bhutan	24	55	5	N/A	6.85%
Brunei	78	19	99	75	0.48%
Cambodia	18	67	42	N/A	4.77%
China	54	90	19	68	11.03%
Hong Kong	89	76	14	82	5.02%
India	31	38	34	35	8.78%
Indonesia	42	46	37	31	6.00%
Japan	88	89	6	71	1.90%
Kazakhstan	62	13	76	42	2.40%
Korea North	18	65	23	N/A	1.50%
Korea South	83	63	22	85	4.44%
Kyrgyz Republic	24	15	84	88	4.61%
Laos	17	54	7	N/A	7.22%
Macao	91	76	14	82	3.00%

Malaysia	68	65	44	90	4.72%
Maldives	44	55	17	N/A	3.45%
Mongolia	33	5	77	93	7.22%
Myanmar	3	41	72	N/A	5.26%
Nepal	3	14	25	N/A	2.97%
Pakistan	19	15	31	41	3.00%
Papua New Guinea	75	50	11	N/A	7.96%
Philippines	30	48	53	43	3.63%
Singapore	93	75	63	40	5.68%
Sri Lanka	38	22	10	N/A	5.50%
Taiwan	84	88	35	89	6.50%
Tajikistan	6	6	60	97	4.00%
Thailand	56	64	90	96	5.46%
Turkmenistan	51	53	68	N/A	12.00%
Uzbekistan	40	10	60	100	8.00%
Vietnam	25	12	20	N/A	6.04%
Pacific					
Australia	96	63	31	46	2.96%

Fiji	46	53	3	N/A	2.06%
Marshall Islands	27	76	46	N/A	1.08%
Micronesia (Fed. States)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
New Caledonia	96	73	51	52	2.00%
New Zealand	98	73	51	52	2.00%
Samoa	34	88	64	N/A	-2.77%
Solomon Islands	14	71	1	N/A	3.36%
Tonga	26	57	38	N/A	0.60%
Vanuatu	33	58	47	N/A	3.80%

Source:

CountryWatch Inc. www.countrywatch.com

Updated:

This material was produced in 2010; it is subject to updating in 2012.

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Chapter 4

Investment Overview

Foreign Investment Climate

Background

Half the population still depends on agriculture and livestock for a livelihood, even though many of the nomads and subsistence farmers were forced into the cities by recurrent droughts in the 1970s and 1980s. Mauritania has extensive deposits of iron ore, which account for nearly 40% of total exports. The nation's coastal waters are among the richest fishing areas in the world but overexploitation by foreigners threatens this key source of revenue. The country's first deepwater port opened near Nouakchott in 1986.

Before 2000, drought and economic mismanagement resulted in a buildup of foreign debt. In February 2000, Mauritania qualified for debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative and nearly all of its foreign debt has since been forgiven. In December 2007 donors pledged $2.1 billion at a triennial Consultative Group review. Mauritania and the IMF agreed to a three-year Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) arrangement in 2006. Mauritania made satisfactory progress, but IMF and World Bank suspended their programs in Mauritania following the August 2008 coup. Following the 2009 presidential elections, the IMF and World Bank agreed to meet with the government to discuss a resumption.

Oil prospects, while initially promising, have largely failed to materialize. The Government continues to emphasize reduction of poverty, improvement of health and education, and privatization of the economy. A new investment code approved in December 2001 improved the opportunities for direct foreign investment.

Foreign Investment Assessment

Openness to Foreign 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.

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 (Article 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 (Article 3);
• freedom to transfer foreign capital (Article 4);
• ability to transfer professional income of foreign employees (Article 4);
• protection of vested interests (Article 5);
• equal treatment of Mauritanian and foreign individuals and legal entities (Article 5)

Transparency of 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.

Labor Force

Total: 786,000

By occupation: agriculture 50%, industry 10%, services 40%

Agriculture and Industry

Agriculture products: dates, millet, sorghum, rice, corn, dates; cattle, sheep

Industries: fish processing, mining of iron ore and gypsum

Import Commodities and Partners

Commodities: machinery and equipment, petroleum products, capital goods, foodstuffs, consumer goods

Partners: France 16.8%, Spain 7.7%, China 6.3%, Belgium 5.1%, Germany 4.8%, Japan 4.2%, UK 4.1%, Netherlands 4%

Export Commodities and Partners

Commodities: iron ore, fish and fish products, gold

Partners: France 14.5%, Japan 12.2%, Spain 11.1%, Italy 10.1%, Belgium 7.6%, Germany 7.3%, Russia 4.9%, Cote d"Ivoire 4.1%

Telephone System

Telephones- main lines in use: 31,500

Telephones- mobile cellular: 300,000

General Assessment: limited system of cable and open-wire lines, minor microwave radio relay links, and radiotelephone communications stations (improvements being made)
Domestic: mostly cable and open-wire lines; a recently completed domestic satellite telecommunications system links Nouakchott with regional capitals
International: country code - 222; satellite earth stations - 1 Intelsat (Atlantic Ocean) and 2 Arabsat

Internet

Internet Hosts: 25

Internet users: 10,000

Roads, Airports, Ports and Harbors

Railways: 717 km

Highways: 7,660 km

Ports and harbors: Bogue, Kaedi, Nouadhibou, Nouakchott, Rosso

Airports: 24; w/paved runways: 8

Legal System and Considerations

Mauritania's legal system is a combination of Shari'a (Islamic law) and French civil law.

<u>Dispute Settlement</u>

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.

Corruption Perception Ranking

See Corruption Perception index reported by Transparency International elsewhere in this report, from least to most corrupt countries.

Cultural Considerations

As in all predominately Muslim cultures, it is important that one respect and adhere to Islamic traditions and customs. For example, one should never offer a Muslim a gift of alcohol or pork. One should also remember that the left hand is taboo and therefore never give, take or eat anything with it.

For more information see:

United States' State Department Commercial Guide

Foreign Investment Index

Foreign Investment Index

The Foreign Investment Index is a proprietary index measuring attractiveness to international investment flows. The Foreign Investment Index is calculated using an established methodology by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on a given country's economic stability (sustained economic growth, monetary stability, current account deficits, budget surplus), economic risk (risk of non-servicing of payments for goods or services, loans and trade-related finance, risk of sovereign default), business and investment climate (property rights, labor force and laws, regulatory transparency, openness to foreign investment, market conditions, and stability of government). Scores are assigned from 0-10 using the aforementioned criteria. A score of 0 marks the lowest level of foreign investment viability, while a score of 10 marks the highest level of foreign investment viability, according to this proprietary index.

Country	Assessment
Afghanistan	2
Albania	4.5
Algeria	6
Andorra	9
Angola	4.5-5
Antigua	8.5
Argentina	5
Armenia	5
Australia	9.5
Austria	9-9.5

Azerbaijan	5
Bahamas	9
Bahrain	7.5
Bangladesh	4.5
Barbados	9
Belarus	4
Belgium	9
Belize	7.5
Benin	5.5
Bhutan	4.5
Bolivia	4.5
Bosnia-Herzegovina	5
Botswana	7.5-8
Brazil	8
Brunei	7
Bulgaria	5.5
Burkina Faso	4
Burma (Myanmar)	4.5

Burundi	4
Cambodia	4.5
Cameroon	5
Canada	9.5
Cape Verde	6
Central African Republic	3
Chad	4
Chile	9
China	7.5
China: Hong Kong	8.5
China: Taiwan	8.5
Colombia	7
Comoros	4
Congo DRC	4
Congo RC	5
Costa Rica	8
Cote d'Ivoire	4.5
Croatia	7

Cuba	4.5
Cyprus	7
Czech Republic	8.5
Denmark	9.5
Djibouti	4.5
Dominica	6
Dominican Republic	6.5
East Timor	4.5
Ecuador	5.5
Egypt	4.5-5
El Salvador	6
Equatorial Guinea	4.5
Eritrea	3.5
Estonia	8
Ethiopia	4.5
Fiji	5
Finland	9
Former Yugoslav Rep. of Macedonia	5

France	9-9.5
Gabon	5.5
Gambia	5
Georgia	5
Germany	9-9.5
Ghana	5.5
Greece	5
Grenada	7.5
Guatemala	5.5
Guinea	3.5
Guinea-Bissau	3.5
Guyana	4.5
Haiti	4
Holy See (Vatican)	n/a
Hong Kong (China)	8.5
Honduras	5.5
Hungary	8
Iceland	8-8.5

India	8
Indonesia	5.5
Iran	4
Iraq	3
Ireland	8
Israel	8.5
Italy	8
Jamaica	5.5
Japan	9.5
Jordan	6
Kazakhstan	6
Kenya	5
Kiribati	5.5
Korea, North	1
Korea, South	9
Kosovo	4.5
Kuwait	8.5
Kyrgyzstan	4.5

Laos	4
Latvia	7
Lebanon	5
Lesotho	5.5
Liberia	3.5
Libya	3
Liechtenstein	9
Lithuania	7.5
Luxembourg	9-9.5
Madagascar	4.5
Malawi	4.5
Malaysia	8.5
Maldives	6.5
Mali	5
Malta	9
Marshall Islands	5
Mauritania	4.5
Mauritius	7.5-8

Mexico	6.5-7
Micronesia	5
Moldova	4.5-5
Monaco	9
Mongolia	5
Montenegro	5.5
Morocco	7.5
Mozambique	5
Namibia	7.5
Nauru	4.5
Nepal	4
Netherlands	9-9.5
New Zealand	9.5
Nicaragua	5
Niger	4.5
Nigeria	4.5
Norway	9-9.5
Oman	8

Pakistan	4
Palau	4.5-5
Panama	7
Papua New Guinea	5
Paraguay	6
Peru	6
Philippines	6
Poland	8
Portugal	7.5-8
Qatar	9
Romania	6-6.5
Russia	6
Rwanda	4
Saint Kitts and Nevis	8
Saint Lucia	8
Saint Vincent and Grenadines	7
Samoa	7
San Marino	8.5

Sao Tome and Principe	4.5-5
Saudi Arabia	7
Senegal	6
Serbia	6
Seychelles	5
Sierra Leone	4
Singapore	9.5
Slovak Republic (Slovakia)	8.5
Slovenia	8.5-9
Solomon Islands	5
Somalia	2
South Africa	8
Spain	7.5-8
Sri Lanka	5.5
Sudan	4
Suriname	5
Swaziland	4.5
Sweden	9.5

Switzerland	9.5
Syria	2.5
Tajikistan	4
Taiwan (China)	8.5
Tanzania	5
Thailand	7.5-8
Togo	4.5-5
Tonga	5.5-6
Trinidad and Tobago	8-8.5
Tunisia	6
Turkey	6.5-7
Turkmenistan	4
Tuvalu	7
Uganda	5
Ukraine	4.5-5
United Arab Emirates	8.5
United Kingdom	9
United States	9

Uruguay	6.5-7
Uzbekistan	4
Vanuatu	6
Venezuela	5
Vietnam	5.5
Yemen	3
Zambia	4.5-5
Zimbabwe	3.5

Editor's Note:

As of 2015, the global economic crisis (emerging in 2008) had affected many countries across the world, resulting in changes to their rankings. Among those countries affected were top tier economies, such as the United Kingdom, Iceland, Switzerland and Austria. However, in all these cases, their rankings have moved back upward in the last couple of years as anxieties have eased. Other top tier countries, such as Spain, Portugal, Ireland, and Italy, suffered some effects due to debt woes and the concomitant effect on the euro zone. Greece, another euro zone nation, was also downgraded due to its sovereign debt crisis; however, Greece's position on the precipice of default incurred a sharper downgrade than the other four euro zone countries mentioned above. Cyprus' exposure to Greek bank yielded a downgrade in its case. Slovenia and Latvia have been slightly downgraded due to a mix of economic and political concerns but could easily be upgraded in a future assessment, should these concerns abate. Meanwhile, the crisis in eastern Ukraine fueled downgrades in that country and neighboring Russia.

Despite the "trifecta of tragedy" in Japan in 2011 -- the earthquake, the ensuing tsunami, and the resulting nuclear crisis -- and the appreciable destabilization of the economic and political terrain therein, this country has only slightly been downgraded. Japan's challenges have been assessed to be transient, the government remains accountable, and there is little risk of default. Both India and China retain their rankings; India holds a slightly higher ranking than China due to its record of democratic representation and accountability.

There were shifts in opposite directions for Mali and Nigeria versus the Central African Republic, Burkina Faso, and Burundi. Mali was slightly upgraded due to its efforts to return to constitutional order following the 2012 coup and to neutralize the threat of separatists and Islamists. Likewise, a new government in Nigeria generated a slight upgrade as the country attempts to confront corruption, crime, and terrorism. But the Central African Republic was downgraded due to the takeover of the government by Seleka rebels and the continued decline into lawlessness in that country. Likewise, the attempts by the leaders of Burundi and Burkina Faso to hold onto power by by-passing the constitution raised eybrows and resulted in downgrades.

Political unrest in Libya and Algeria have contributed to a decision to marginally downgrade these countries as well. Syria incurred a sharper downgrade due to the devolution into de facto civil war and the dire security threat posed by Islamist terrorists. Iraq saw a similar downgrade as a result of the takeover of wide swaths of territory and the threat of genocide at the hands of Islamist terrorists. Yemen, likewise, has been downgraded due to political instability at the hands of secessionists, terrorists, Houthi rebels, and the intervention of external parties. Conversely, Egypt and Tunisia saw slight upgrades as their political environments stabilize.

At the low end of the spectrum, devolving security conditions and/or economic crisis have resulted in countries like Pakistan, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Zimbabwe maintaining their low ratings.

The United States continues to retain its previous slight downgrade due to the enduring threat of default surrounding the debt ceiling in that country, matched by a conflict-ridden political climate. In the case of Mexico, there is limited concern about default, but increasing alarm over the security situation in that country and the government's ability to contain it. In Argentina, a default to bond holders resulted in a downgrade to that country. Finally, a small but significant upgrade was attributed to Cuba due to its recent pro-business reforms and its normalization of ties with the Unitd States.

Source:

CountryWatch Inc. www.countrywatch.com

Updated:

2015

Corruption Perceptions Index

Corruption Perceptions Index

Transparency International: Corruption Perceptions Index

Editor's Note:

Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index is a composite index which ranks countries in terms of the degree to which corruption is perceived to exist among public officials. This index indicates the views of national and international business people and analysts about the levels of corruption in each country. The highest (and best) level of transparency is indicated by the number, 10. The lower (and worse) levels of transparency are indicated by lower numbers.

Rank	Country/Territory	CPI 2009 Score	Surveys Used	Confidence Range
1	New Zealand	9.4	6	9.1 - 9.5
2	Denmark	9.3	6	9.1 - 9.5
3	Singapore	9.2	9	9.0 - 9.4
3	Sweden	9.2	6	9.0 - 9.3
5	Switzerland	9.0	6	8.9 - 9.1
6	Finland	8.9	6	8.4 - 9.4
6	Netherlands	8.9	6	8.7 - 9.0
8	Australia	8.7	8	8.3 - 9.0
8	Canada	8.7	6	8.5 - 9.0
8	Iceland	8.7	4	7.5 - 9.4

11	Norway	8.6	6	8.2 - 9.1
12	Hong Kong	8.2	8	7.9 - 8.5
12	Luxembourg	8.2	6	7.6 - 8.8
14	Germany	8.0	6	7.7 - 8.3
14	Ireland	8.0	6	7.8 - 8.4
16	Austria	7.9	6	7.4 - 8.3
17	Japan	7.7	8	7.4 - 8.0
17	United Kingdom	7.7	6	7.3 - 8.2
19	United States	7.5	8	6.9 - 8.0
20	Barbados	7.4	4	6.6 - 8.2
21	Belgium	7.1	6	6.9 - 7.3
22	Qatar	7.0	6	5.8 - 8.1
22	Saint Lucia	7.0	3	6.7 - 7.5
24	France	6.9	6	6.5 - 7.3
25	Chile	6.7	7	6.5 - 6.9
25	Uruguay	6.7	5	6.4 - 7.1
27	Cyprus	6.6	4	6.1 - 7.1
27	Estonia	6.6	8	6.1 - 6.9

27	Slovenia	6.6	8	6.3 - 6.9
30	United Arab Emirates	6.5	5	5.5 - 7.5
31	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	6.4	3	4.9 - 7.5
32	Israel	6.1	6	5.4 - 6.7
32	Spain	6.1	6	5.5 - 6.6
34	Dominica	5.9	3	4.9 - 6.7
35	Portugal	5.8	6	5.5 - 6.2
35	Puerto Rico	5.8	4	5.2 - 6.3
37	Botswana	5.6	6	5.1 - 6.3
37	Taiwan	5.6	9	5.4 - 5.9
39	Brunei Darussalam	5.5	4	4.7 - 6.4
39	Oman	5.5	5	4.4 - 6.5
39	Korea (South)	5.5	9	5.3 - 5.7
42	Mauritius	5.4	6	5.0 - 5.9
43	Costa Rica	5.3	5	4.7 - 5.9
43	Macau	5.3	3	3.3 - 6.9
45	Malta	5.2	4	4.0 - 6.2
46	Bahrain	5.1	5	4.2 - 5.8

46	Cape Verde	5.1	3	3.3 - 7.0
46	Hungary	5.1	8	4.6 - 5.7
49	Bhutan	5.0	4	4.3 - 5.6
49	Jordan	5.0	7	3.9 - 6.1
49	Poland	5.0	8	4.5 - 5.5
52	Czech Republic	4.9	8	4.3 - 5.6
52	Lithuania	4.9	8	4.4 - 5.4
54	Seychelles	4.8	3	3.0 - 6.7
55	South Africa	4.7	8	4.3 - 4.9
56	Latvia	4.5	6	4.1 - 4.9
56	Malaysia	4.5	9	4.0 - 5.1
56	Namibia	4.5	6	3.9 - 5.1
56	Samoa	4.5	3	3.3 - 5.3
56	Slovakia	4.5	8	4.1 - 4.9
61	Cuba	4.4	3	3.5 - 5.1
61	Turkey	4.4	7	3.9 - 4.9
63	Italy	4.3	6	3.8 - 4.9
63	Saudi Arabia	4.3	5	3.1 - 5.3

65	Tunisia	4.2	6	3.0 - 5.5
66	Croatia	4.1	8	3.7 - 4.5
66	Georgia	4.1	7	3.4 - 4.7
66	Kuwait	4.1	5	3.2 - 5.1
69	Ghana	3.9	7	3.2 - 4.6
69	Montenegro	3.9	5	3.5 - 4.4
71	Bulgaria	3.8	8	3.2 - 4.5
71	FYR Macedonia	3.8	6	3.4 - 4.2
71	Greece	3.8	6	3.2 - 4.3
71	Romania	3.8	8	3.2 - 4.3
75	Brazil	3.7	7	3.3 - 4.3
75	Colombia	3.7	7	3.1 - 4.3
75	Peru	3.7	7	3.4 - 4.1
75	Suriname	3.7	3	3.0 - 4.7
79	Burkina Faso	3.6	7	2.8 - 4.4
79	China	3.6	9	3.0 - 4.2
79	Swaziland	3.6	3	3.0 - 4.7
79	Trinidad and Tobago	3.6	4	3.0 - 4.3

83	Serbia	3.5	6	3.3 - 3.9
84	El Salvador	3.4	5	3.0 - 3.8
84	Guatemala	3.4	5	3.0 - 3.9
84	India	3.4	10	3.2 - 3.6
84	Panama	3.4	5	3.1 - 3.7
84	Thailand	3.4	9	3.0 - 3.8
89	Lesotho	3.3	6	2.8 - 3.8
89	Malawi	3.3	7	2.7 - 3.9
89	Mexico	3.3	7	3.2 - 3.5
89	Moldova	3.3	6	2.7 - 4.0
89	Morocco	3.3	6	2.8 - 3.9
89	Rwanda	3.3	4	2.9 - 3.7
95	Albania	3.2	6	3.0 - 3.3
95	Vanuatu	3.2	3	2.3 - 4.7
97	Liberia	3.1	3	1.9 - 3.8
97	Sri Lanka	3.1	7	2.8 - 3.4
99	Bosnia and Herzegovina	3.0	7	2.6 - 3.4
99	Dominican Republic	3.0	5	2.9 - 3.2

99	Jamaica	3.0	5	2.8 - 3.3
99	Madagascar	3.0	7	2.8 - 3.2
99	Senegal	3.0	7	2.5 - 3.6
99	Tonga	3.0	3	2.6 - 3.3
99	Zambia	3.0	7	2.8 - 3.2
106	Argentina	2.9	7	2.6 - 3.1
106	Benin	2.9	6	2.3 - 3.4
106	Gabon	2.9	3	2.6 - 3.1
106	Gambia	2.9	5	1.6 - 4.0
106	Niger	2.9	5	2.7 - 3.0
111	Algeria	2.8	6	2.5 - 3.1
111	Djibouti	2.8	4	2.3 - 3.2
111	Egypt	2.8	6	2.6 - 3.1
111	Indonesia	2.8	9	2.4 - 3.2
111	Kiribati	2.8	3	2.3 - 3.3
111	Mali	2.8	6	2.4 - 3.2
111	Sao Tome and Principe	2.8	3	2.4 - 3.3
111	Solomon Islands	2.8	3	2.3 - 3.3

111	Togo	2.8	5	1.9 - 3.9
120	Armenia	2.7	7	2.6 - 2.8
120	Bolivia	2.7	6	2.4 - 3.1
120	Ethiopia	2.7	7	2.4 - 2.9
120	Kazakhstan	2.7	7	2.1 - 3.3
120	Mongolia	2.7	7	2.4 - 3.0
120	Vietnam	2.7	9	2.4 - 3.1
126	Eritrea	2.6	4	1.6 - 3.8
126	Guyana	2.6	4	2.5 - 2.7
126	Syria	2.6	5	2.2 - 2.9
126	Tanzania	2.6	7	2.4 - 2.9
130	Honduras	2.5	6	2.2 - 2.8
130	Lebanon	2.5	3	1.9 - 3.1
130	Libya	2.5	6	2.2 - 2.8
130	Maldives	2.5	4	1.8 - 3.2
130	Mauritania	2.5	7	2.0 - 3.3
130	Mozambique	2.5	7	2.3 - 2.8
130	Nicaragua	2.5	6	2.3 - 2.7

130	Nigeria	2.5	7	2.2 - 2.7
130	Uganda	2.5	7	2.1 - 2.8
139	Bangladesh	2.4	7	2.0 - 2.8
139	Belarus	2.4	4	2.0 - 2.8
139	Pakistan	2.4	7	2.1 - 2.7
139	Philippines	2.4	9	2.1 - 2.7
143	Azerbaijan	2.3	7	2.0 - 2.6
143	Comoros	2.3	3	1.6 - 3.3
143	Nepal	2.3	6	2.0 - 2.6
146	Cameroon	2.2	7	1.9 - 2.6
146	Ecuador	2.2	5	2.0 - 2.5
146	Kenya	2.2	7	1.9 - 2.5
146	Russia	2.2	8	1.9 - 2.4
146	Sierra Leone	2.2	5	1.9 - 2.4
146	Timor-Leste	2.2	5	1.8 - 2.6
146	Ukraine	2.2	8	2.0 - 2.6
146	Zimbabwe	2.2	7	1.7 - 2.8
154	Côte d´Ivoire	2.1	7	1.8 - 2.4

154	Papua New Guinea	2.1	5	1.7 - 2.5
154	Paraguay	2.1	5	1.7 - 2.5
154	Yemen	2.1	4	1.6 - 2.5
158	Cambodia	2.0	8	1.8 - 2.2
158	Central African Republic	2.0	4	1.9 - 2.2
158	Laos	2.0	4	1.6 - 2.6
158	Tajikistan	2.0	8	1.6 - 2.5
162	Angola	1.9	5	1.8 - 1.9
162	Congo Brazzaville	1.9	5	1.6 - 2.1
162	Democratic Republic of Congo	1.9	5	1.7 - 2.1
162	Guinea-Bissau	1.9	3	1.8 - 2.0
162	Kyrgyzstan	1.9	7	1.8 - 2.1
162	Venezuela	1.9	7	1.8 - 2.0
168	Burundi	1.8	6	1.6 - 2.0
168	Equatorial Guinea	1.8	3	1.6 - 1.9
168	Guinea	1.8	5	1.7 - 1.8
168	Haiti	1.8	3	1.4 - 2.3
168	Iran	1.8	3	1.7 - 1.9

168	Turkmenistan	1.8	4	1.7 - 1.9
174	Uzbekistan	1.7	6	1.5 - 1.8
175	Chad	1.6	6	1.5 - 1.7
176	Iraq	1.5	3	1.2 - 1.8
176	Sudan	1.5	5	1.4 - 1.7
178	Myanmar	1.4	3	0.9 - 1.8
179	Afghanistan	1.3	4	1.0 - 1.5
180	Somalia	1.1	3	0.9 - 1.4

Methodology:

As noted above, the highest (and best) level of transparency with the least perceived corruption is indicated by the number, 10. The lower (and worse) levels of transparency are indicated by lower numbers.

According to Transparency International, the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) table shows a country's ranking and score, the number of surveys used to determine the score, and the confidence range of the scoring.

The rank shows how one country compares to others included in the index. The CPI score indicates the perceived level of public-sector corruption in a country/territory.

The CPI is based on 13 independent surveys. However, not all surveys include all countries. The surveys used column indicates how many surveys were relied upon to determine the score for that country.

The confidence range indicates the reliability of the CPI scores and tells us that allowing for a margin of error, we can be 90% confident that the true score for this country lies within this range.

<u>Note</u>:

Kosovo, which separated from the Yugoslav successor state of <u>Serbia</u>, is not listed above. No calculation is available for <u>Kosovo</u> at this time, however, a future corruption index by Transparency International may include the world's newest country in its tally. Taiwan has been listed above despite its contested status; while Taiwan claims sovereign status, <u>China</u> claims ultimate jurisdiction over Taiwan. Hong Kong, which is also under the rubric of Chinese sovereignty, is listed above. Note as well that Puerto Rico, which is a <u>United States</u> domain, is also included in the list above. These inclusions likely have to do with the size and fairly autonomous status of their economies.

<u>Source</u>:

Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index; available at URL: http://www.transparency.org

<u>Updated</u>:

Uploaded in 2011 using most recent ranking available; reviewed in 2015.

Competitiveness Ranking

Competitiveness Ranking

<u>Editor's Note:</u>

The Global Competitiveness Report's competitiveness ranking is based on the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI), which was developed for the World Economic Forum. The GCI is based on a number of competitiveness considerations, and provides a comprehensive picture of the competitiveness landscape in countries around the world. The competitiveness considerations are: institutions, infrastructure, macroeconomic environment, health and primary education, higher education and training, goods market efficiency, labour market efficiency, financial market development, technological readiness, market size, business sophistication, and innovation. The rankings are calculated from both publicly available data and the Executive Opinion Survey.

Country/Economy	GCI 2010 Rank	GCI 2010 Score	GCI 2009 Rank	Change 2009-2010

Switzerland	1	5.63	1	0
Sweden	2	5.56	4	2
Singapore	3	5.48	3	0
United States	4	5.43	2	-2
Germany	5	5.39	7	2
Japan	6	5.37	8	2
Finland	7	5.37	6	-1
Netherlands	8	5.33	10	2
Denmark	9	5.32	5	-4
Canada	10	5.30	9	-1
Hong Kong SAR	11	5.30	11	0
United Kingdom	12	5.25	13	1
Taiwan, China	13	5.21	12	-1
Norway	14	5.14	14	0
France	15	5.13	16	1
Australia	16	5.11	15	-1
Qatar	17	5.10	22	5
Austria	18	5.09	17	-1

Belgium	19	5.07	18	-1
Luxembourg	20	5.05	21	1
Saudi Arabia	21	4.95	28	7
Korea, Rep.	22	4.93	19	-3
New Zealand	23	4.92	20	-3
Israel	24	4.91	27	3
United Arab Emirates	25	4.89	23	-2
Malaysia	26	4.88	24	-2
China	27	4.84	29	2
Brunei Darussalam	28	4.75	32	4
Ireland	29	4.74	25	-4
Chile	30	4.69	30	0
Iceland	31	4.68	26	-5
Tunisia	32	4.65	40	8
Estonia	33	4.61	35	2
Oman	34	4.61	41	7
Kuwait	35	4.59	39	4
Czech Republic	36	4.57	31	-5

Bahrain	37	4.54	38	1
Thailand	38	4.51	36	-2
Poland	39	4.51	46	7
Cyprus	40	4.50	34	-6
Puerto Rico	41	4.49	42	1
Spain	42	4.49	33	-9
Barbados	43	4.45	44	1
Indonesia	44	4.43	54	10
Slovenia	45	4.42	37	-8
Portugal	46	4.38	43	-3
Lithuania	47	4.38	53	6
Italy	48	4.37	48	0
Montenegro	49	4.36	62	13
Malta	50	4.34	52	2
India	51	4.33	49	-2
Hungary	52	4.33	58	6
Panama	53	4.33	59	6
South Africa	54	4.32	45	-9

Mauritius	55	4.32	57	2
Costa Rica	56	4.31	55	-1
Azerbaijan	57	4.29	51	-6
Brazil	58	4.28	56	-2
Vietnam	59	4.27	75	16
Slovak Republic	60	4.25	47	-13
Turkey	61	4.25	61	0
Sri Lanka	62	4.25	79	17
Russian Federation	63	4.24	63	0
Uruguay	64	4.23	65	1
Jordan	65	4.21	50	-15
Mexico	66	4.19	60	-6
Romania	67	4.16	64	-3
Colombia	68	4.14	69	1
Iran	69	4.14	n/a	n/a
Latvia	70	4.14	68	-2
Bulgaria	71	4.13	76	5
Kazakhstan	72	4.12	67	-5

Peru	73	4.11	78	5
Namibia	74	4.09	74	0
Morocco	75	4.08	73	-2
Botswana	76	4.05	66	-10
Croatia	77	4.04	72	-5
Guatemala	78	4.04	80	2
Macedonia, FYR	79	4.02	84	5
Rwanda	80	4.00	n/a	n/a
Egypt	81	4.00	70	-11
El Salvador	82	3.99	77	-5
Greece	83	3.99	71	-12
Trinidad and Tobago	84	3.97	86	2
Philippines	85	3.96	87	2
Algeria	86	3.96	83	-3
Argentina	87	3.95	85	-2
Albania	88	3.94	96	8
Ukraine	89	3.90	82	-7
Gambia, The	90	3.90	81	-9

Honduras	91	3.89	89	-2
Lebanon	92	3.89	n/a	n/a
Georgia	93	3.86	90	-3
Moldova	94	3.86	n/a	n/a
Jamaica	95	3.85	91	-4
Serbia	96	3.84	93	-3
Syria	97	3.79	94	-3
Armenia	98	3.76	97	-1
Mongolia	99	3.75	117	18
Libya	100	3.74	88	-12
Dominican Republic	101	3.72	95	-6
Bosnia and Herzegovina	102	3.70	109	7
Benin	103	3.69	103	0
Senegal	104	3.67	92	-12
Ecuador	105	3.65	105	0
Kenya	106	3.65	98	-8
Bangladesh	107	3.64	106	-1
Bolivia	108	3.64	120	12

Cambodia	109	3.63	110	1
Guyana	110	3.62	104	-6
Cameroon	111	3.58	111	0
Nicaragua	112	3.57	115	3
Tanzania	113	3.56	100	-13
Ghana	114	3.56	114	0
Zambia	115	3.55	112	-3
Tajikistan	116	3.53	122	6
Cape Verde	117	3.51	n/a	n/a
Uganda	118	3.51	108	-10
Ethiopia	119	3.51	118	-1
Paraguay	120	3.49	124	4
Kyrgyz Republic	121	3.49	123	2
Venezuela	122	3.48	113	-9
Pakistan	123	3.48	101	-22
Madagascar	124	3.46	121	-3
Malawi	125	3.45	119	-6
Swaziland	126	3.40	n/a	n/a

Nigeria	127	3.38	99	-28
Lesotho	128	3.36	107	-21
Côte d'Ivoire	129	3.35	116	-13
Nepal	130	3.34	125	-5
Mozambique	131	3.32	129	-2
Mali	132	3.28	130	-2
Timor-Leste	133	3.23	126	-7
Burkina Faso	134	3.20	128	-6
Mauritania	135	3.14	127	-8
Zimbabwe	136	3.03	132	-4
Burundi	137	2.96	133	-4
Angola	138	2.93	n/a	n/a
Chad	139	2.73	131	-8

Methodology:

The competitiveness rankings are calculated from both publicly available data and the Executive Opinion Survey, a comprehensive annual survey conducted by the World Economic Forum together with its network of Partner Institutes (leading research institutes and business organizations) in the countries covered by the Report.

Highlights according to WEF --

- The United States falls two places to fourth position, overtaken by Sweden and Singapore in the rankings of the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report 2010-2011
- The People's Republic of China continues to move up the rankings, with marked improvements in several other Asian countries
- Germany moves up two places to fifth place, leading the Eurozone countries
- Switzerland tops the rankings

Source:

World Economic Forum; available at URL: http://www.weforum.org

Updated:

2011 using most recent ranking available; reviewed in 2015.

Taxation

The tax on industrial, commercial and agricultural profits is 40 percent. A minimum tax of four percent is levied on turnover with a minimum payment of 300,000 Ouguiyas. The minimum turnover tax for fishing enterprises is two percent. Capital gains that are reinvested within three years are exempt from taxation. A 16 percent withholding tax applies to securities interest and dividends.

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

Stock Market

There is currently no stock market information available for Mauritania.

Partner Links

Partner Links

Chapter 5

Social Overview

People

The Heritage of Mauritania

The Saharan Desert has linked, rather than divided, the peoples who inhabit it, and has served as an avenue for trade, migration and conquest. Mauritania, lying next to the Atlantic coast at the western edge of the desert, received and assimilated into its complex society many waves of these migrants and conquerors.

Today, Mauritania's population reflects its historical legacy. About two-thirds are Maure and about one-third are of black African descent; about half of the Maure population is actually a mixture of Arab (Moorish) and African lineage. Most of the Arab (Moorish) population consists of nomadic herdsmen, who are somewhat concentrated in the northern area, close to the Sahara Desert. The black African population tends to farm the Senegal River Valley area and as such, they are concentrated in the south of the country. There is also a small percent of non-Africans such as French and Lebanese.

The Moors are descendants of North African Berbers and Middle Eastern Arabs who migrated to the present-day Mauritania and, in effect, controlled the region. The black Africans share various ethnic and linguistic traits with other ethnic groups of the Senegal River Valley, notably Wolof and Pulaar. The mixed population share Arab, Berber and black African ancestry.

Social Structure

The historical ethnic divisions have contributed to the contemporary social structure of Mauritania. That is to say, much social status is determined by descent from either the region's Arab-Berber conquerors, or the black African peoples they had dominion over. A distinction between the aristocracy and the servant class traditionally defined Mauritanian society as a dichotomy of "white" and "black" respectively.

The "white" system has predominately been a caste system marked by regionally-based lordships and class identities on racial lines. The "black" system has been predominately a kinship system in which family is preserved by interaction and socially supported, shared religious observances, and

rituals celebrating stages of life. Both politically and socially the "white" system has long dominated the "black" system. As a result, lineage has become the most important determining factor in Mauritanian social status. These lineage lines follow race lines in which "whites" are superior to "blacks." However, they also follow gender lines. Patrilineal and matrilineal descent are traced separately. Connection to a higher social class through patrilineal descent gives higher social status than through matrilineal descent. In general, a person's social class is only as high as his patrilineal relative.

As with most societies in which lineage dominates the social infrastructure, there is a significant unity of both living and dead relatives. Ancestors are held in high importance and lineage groups, especially patrilineal groups tend to celebrate together to maintain the lineage bond.

Modernization, Urbaniation, Caste and Class

There is some evidence to suggest that modernization has led to a gradual decline in the importance of caste in the post-independence period. Change in Mauritanian society has been more rapid than perhaps anywhere in Africa. In 1960 an estimated five percent of the population was urban. Today it is estimated that 90 percent of the population is urban.

The dramatic rapidity of this shift can largely be attributed to land issues. Most of Mauritania is a desert and not arable. As a result the majority of the population in 1960 were nomadic herders. The connection most people have to the land is thus significantly less than in predominantly agrarian societies. People are more mobile. As desertification, declining importance of trade routes, and other factors have detracted from the viability of desert life, the population has naturally migrated. This urbanization trend may ultimately eliminate the caste divisions, but opportunities for blacks do not appear to be increasing at the same rate as whites. It is thus likely that the connection between race and caste will continue to give way to a more modern structure that correlates race and class.

The process of creating a national Mauritanian identity is still nascent. Even though class identities have begun to predominate over caste identities, loyalty to lineage still outweigh allegiances to state or national institutions. Those of a higher caste, specifically the zawaya, tend to use their dominant education to control economic and political institutions at the state level. Hassani or other white groups tend to prosper in business and as civil servants, but not in positions of power. Blacks, mostly Wolof, who largely made up the civil servants during the period of French colonialism, have been alienated. There is also an intermediate group of Haratin, Black Maures, who are former slaves or descendants of slaves who adopted the Arab-Berber culture of their masters.

There were significant tensions between Maures and blacks in the late 1980s. Maures considered blacks inferior and thought they should be subservient to Maure control and blacks considered

Maures lazy, ignorant and inefficient. As many Maures also were slaveholders, they also feared growing Maure dominance in the political and economic realm. This culminated in the expulsion of a large number of blacks from Mauritania to Senegal in 1990-91.

A persistent dividing factor between blacks and whites are the fertile lands of the Senegal River Valley. Blacks fear that increased desertification will push wealthy Maures to buy up, or, worse, take over what have historically been black lands. Recent efforts by Senegal to divert part of the Senegal River for agricultural purposes have further exacerbated these tensions.

Language

Language has also been a disruptive rather than a uniting force in the seeking of a Mauritanian national identity. At independence in 1960, Hassaniya Arabic was made the national language and French the official language. In 1966, however, Hassaniya Arabic and French were made co-official languages. Since then, Arabic has been the language of instruction in all secondary schools. Today, Hassaniya Arabic is the official language. Mauritanian blacks have argued that the use of Arabic in secondary school has been an effort on the part of Maures to block black advancement in the bureaucracy. For Maures Arabic is a first language, while many blacks do not even have an opportunity to study it prior to being required to being instructed in the language. Blacks thus commonly attend primary school in their own language and then are blocked by their lack of language skills from continuing.

Religion

The language barrier is also a religious barrier. Nearly all of Mauritania's population is Sunni Muslim. Arabic is the language of prayer. Advancement in religious education is important to one's social status. Without a strong knowledge of Arabic, it is difficult to increase one's social importance in the religious sphere. Speakers of Wolof and Pulaar thus lack the opportunity to advance in religious circles.

Human Development

Mauritania has predominantly been a nomadic society, and its resources are limited to iron ore and fish; in many ways, it has had a more difficult social and economic challenge than many other African countries. As a result, living conditions in Mauritania remain exceedingly poor despite a persistent economic growth rate of five percent. There is a deep divide between the haves and have-nots along race lines.

According to recent estimates, literacy is 41.7 percent, the infant mortality rate is 78 deaths per 1,000 live births, and life expectancy is 52 years. Fortunately, at 1.8 percent, according to recent statistics, the rate of HIV/AIDS infection in Mauritania remains somewhat low in comparison with other African countries.

About 5.7 percent of GDP in this country is spent on health expenditures; about 4.4 percent of GDP is spent on educational expenditures.

One notable indicator used to measure a country's quality of life is the Human Development Index (HDI), which is compiled annually since 1990 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The HDI is a composite of several indicators, which measure a country's achievements in three main areas of human development: longevity, knowledge and education, as well as economic standard of living. In a recent ranking of 169 countries, the HDI placed Mauritania in the low human development category, at 136th place.

Note: Although the concept of human development is complicated and cannot be properly captured by values and indices, the HDI, which is calculated and updated annually, offers a wide-ranging assessment of human development in certain countries, not based solely upon traditional economic and financial indicators.

Special Report:
Slavery in Mauritania

The number of slaves in the world today is more than seven and a half times the number in the United States at the height of American slavery. According to the U.S. census there were 3.9 million slaves in the U.S. in 1860, more than at any point in U.S. history. Yet, University of London sociologist Kevin Bales estimates that there are 27 million slaves in the world today. The difficulty of measuring this population leads Bales to report this figure though it has a margin of error of plus or minus six to seven million.

This alarmingly high figure requires some explanation. Bales, like abolitionist and journalist Samuel Cotton, redefines slavery for the 21st century. Whereas according to the U.N. Convention of Sept. 25, 1926, slavery is defined as "the state or condition of an individual over whom the attributes of property rights or some of them" are exercised, Bales defines slavery as "the complete control of a person for economic exploitation by violence or the threat of violence." New forms of persecution, he asserts, require new definitions.

Bales defines three primary types of slavery in the world today: chattel, debt bondage and contract. The first, chattel slavery, meets the criteria set out in the 1926 convention. Individuals who are owned by other individuals are slaves. The second, debt bondage, is more common. A person

pledges him or herself against a loan of money with an undefined length of servitude. The original debt is never repaid and is passed down from generation to generation. The third type, contract slavery, is a hidden form of slavery within modern labor relations. Contracts are offered to individuals offering pay for services in a workshop or factory, but when they get there they learn that they are never paid and cannot leave under threat of violence. Notably missing from these definitions of slavery is employment at the margins. In an effort to maintain scientific rigor in the face of activism, Bales differentiates between slavery and near torturous working conditions for less than the global poverty rate of $1 per day even when workers are kept there by force or threat. The 27 million people he estimates to enslaved today thus does not include the many millions more who work in these treacherous conditions.

The need for this change of definition is made evident both by Bales and by Cotton. In the 18th and 19th century slaves were extremely expensive. Owners could abuse their human property, but they had to take care of them enough to maintain their investment. In today's global marketplace, people are disposable inputs into production. There is an unlimited supply of workers so they can be abused or even worked to death without economic consequence to the owner. This is particularly insidious as it is a byproduct of the globalization of the world economy, increasing in number with global business of the 21st century. Whereas once labor needed to be protected because it needed to be brought to the place of work, labor can be exploited as the place of work can move to where the market is greatest.

The problem of the definition of slavery haunts many countries of the world. There are 300 laws and international agreements against slavery, but yet 15 to 20 million bonded laborers persist in India, Pakistan and Nepal. The specific forms of slavery found in these countries have grown out of their histories of feudalism. Girls for sex predominate the slave marketplace in Southeast Asia, and an estimated 50,000 sex and domestic slaves are held under threat of violence in the United States.

Mauritania is the only country left in the world with a significant percentage of the population held in chattel slavery. Estimates vary widely. Some people argue that it is a historic vestige limited to a few tens of thousands of people. Fatmata Mbaye, who received the Nuremberg International Human Rights Award in 1999 for her campaign against Mauritanian slavery, placed that number even higher arguing that 40 percent - over one million - of Mauritanians are either slaves or exploited by the country's elites. Bales addresses the topic with great rigor. It can be argued, therefore that his figure of just over half a million may be the most accurate.

Slavery has been a persistent issue in Mauritania. The Mauritanian government established the National Committee for the Struggle against the Vestiges of Slavery in the 1980s. According to the Mauritanian government, slavery has ceased to exist in the country. However, modifications of the legal framework have made this a legal reality not met by even the most anachronistic of definitions.

Arab traders brought slavery to Mauritania as early as the 15th century. The caste structure and racial divide has perpetuated the role of slavery over the centuries both as a means of extracting resources from Mauritania and as a means of perpetuating the dominance of local leaders. Beyond the division of the Mauritanian population into a multi-racial majority of Arabic speakers, and a multi-ethnic minority of non-Arabic speakers, the traditional Mauritanian society had a deep hierarchical organization. In all components, the hierarchical organization closely followed the same social pyramid: aristocracy, caste members and servile strata. It is the members of these historically servile strata who now suffer in servitude.

It is important that in Mauritania caste and race have historically been linked. People thought of as Arabs (Berbers or White Moures) enslave people thought of as African or non-Arab. The maintenance of African slaves (Abeed) is seen by White Moures as fundamental to their continued social and economic dominance and the stability of social institutions. The importance is twofold. First, as Cotton points out, Arab dominance in the political sphere is seen as dependent upon the continued dominance in the social and economic sphere. As a result, it behooves the government to maintain the status quo. If this is so then not only is the White Mouer Mauritanian government guilty of perpetuating slavery, but any person, group, or country that seeks to maintain the strength of that government is guilty of perpetuating slavery. Cotton specifically names National of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan as guilty of this injustice. Farrakhan was challenged directly on this issue in relation to his support for a similar social structure in the Sudan. In response, Farrakhan asserted that anyone who believes that slavery still exists is perpetuating a Jewish plot.

The second reason why the correlation between caste and race is so critical has to do with the transformation of caste structure. In Mauritania caste was developed as part of a nomadic societal structure driving a trade economy. Today's Mauritania is quite different. Whereas in 1960 camels still watered in the holes of Nouakchott, today it is a bustling city of 700,000 people with one of the fastest growth rates in the world. Nomadic trade routes are all but abandoned in favor of engagement in the modern economy. Under these new social conditions, caste structure is giving way to class structure. It is only a matter of time before chattel slavery becomes socially difficult to maintain. Slavery as a social institution, it seems, will have modernize like other social institutions or else face extinction. Since slavery is not only caste but race-based there is a reason to believe that this will happen. The chattel slaves of today will then become the contract and debt bonde d slaves of tomorrow, thereby maintaining White Moure dominance long after the vestiges of caste identity falls away.

The modernization of slavery in Mauritania is well summed up by Aissata Kane. Kane was the country's first female cabinet minister in the 1970s and is now the head of a prominent women's association. Well-protected in her brightly colored boubou from the eyes of men, a journalist asked her if she thought women in Mauritania were oppressed. She responded that women in Mauritania in fact are freer than in most of Africa. The enslavement of women actually increases women's

rights. Whereas in most of Africa women are burdened by tremendous domestic responsibilities in service to their families, Mauritanian women have black slaves to carry out such chores. Women are then free to pursue the economic, social and political activities hitherto held only by men. This has allowed her to work to move towards the rights of women to property and material goods and the rights of women to divorce. Freedom from daily chores, she argues, has afforded the modern Mauritanian woman the oppor tunity to demonstrate her business acumen. As a result, today women dominate retail trade in Mauritania. From this view, the modernization of not only the economy but also social roles such as gender rights is dependent upon the smooth transition of slavery sub-types along race lines. Such a complex socioeconomic conundrum will not easily be solved with new legislation.

Written by Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman, Editor in Chief at www.countrywatch.com. See Bibliography for list of research sources. Specific sources used in this section: Kevin Bales, Samuel Cotton, MEED Quarterly Report - Maghreb, Deutsche Presse-Agentur, Amnesty International.

Human Development Index

Human Development Index

Human Development Index (Ranked Numerically)

The Human Development Index (HDI) is used to measure quality of life in countries across the world. The HDI has been compiled since 1990 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on a regular basis. The HDI is a composite of several indicators, which measure a country's achievements in three main arenas of human development: longevity, education, and economic standard of living. Although the concept of human development is complicated and cannot be properly captured by values and indices, the HDI offers a wide-ranging assessment of human development in certain countries, not based solely upon traditional economic and financial indicators. For more information about the methodology used to calculate the HDI, please see the "Source Materials" in the appendices of this review.

Very High Human	High Human	Medium Human	Low Human

Development	Development	Development	Development
1. Norway	43. Bahamas	86. Fiji	128. Kenya
2. Australia	44. Lithuania	87. Turkmenistan	129. Bangladesh
3. New Zealand	45. Chile	88. Dominican Republic	130. Ghana
4. United States	46. Argentina	89. China	131. Cameroon
5. Ireland	47. Kuwait	90. El Salvador	132. Myanmar (Burma)
6. Liechtenstein	48. Latvia	91. Sri Lanka	133. Yemen
7. Netherlands	49. Montenegro	92. Thailand	134. Benin
8. Canada	50. Romania	93. Gabon	135. Madagascar
9. Sweden	51. Croatia	94. Surname	136. Mauritania
10. Germany	52. Uruguay	95. Bolivia	137. Papua New Guinea
11. Japan	53. Libya	96. Paraguay	138. Nepal
12. South Korea	54. Panama	97. Philippines	139. Togo
13. Switzerland	55. Saudi Arabia	98. Botswana	140. Comoros
14. France	56. Mexico	99. Moldova	141. Lesotho
15. Israel	57. Malaysia	100. Mongolia	142. Nigeria
16. Finland	58. Bulgaria	101. Egypt	143. Uganda

17. Iceland	59. Trinidad and Tobago	102. Uzbekistan	144. Senegal
18. Belgium	60. Serbia	103. Micronesia	145. Haiti
19. Denmark	61. Belarus	104. Guyana	146. Angola
20. Spain	62. Costa Rica	105. Namibia	147. Djibouti
21. Hong King	63. Peru	106. Honduras	148. Tanzania
22. Greece	64. Albania	107. Maldives	149. Cote d'Ivoire
23. Italy	65. Russian Federation	108. Indonesia	150. Zambia
24. Luxembourg	66. Kazakhstan	109. Kyrgyzstan	151. Gambia
25. Austria	67. Azerbaijan	110. South Africa	152. Rwanda
26. United Kingdom	68. Bosnia and Herzegovina	111. Syria	153. Malawi
27. Singapore	69. Ukraine	112. Tajikistan	154. Sudan
28. Czech Republic	70. Iran	113. Vietnam	155. Afghanistan
29. Slovenia	71. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	114. Morocco	156. Guinea
30. Andorra	72. Mauritius	115. Nicaragua	157. Ethiopia
31. Slovakia	73. Brazil	116. Guatemala	158. Sierra Leone
			159. Central

32. United Arab Emirates	74. Georgia	117. Equatorial Guinea	African Republic
33. Malta	75. Venezuela	118. Cape Verde	160. Mali
34. Estonia	76. Armenia	119. India	161. Burkina Faso
35. Cyprus	77. Ecuador	120. East Timor	162. Liberia
36. Hungary	78. Belize	121. Swaziland	163. Chad
37. Brunei	79. Colombia	122. Laos	164. Guinea-Bissau
38. Qatar	80. Jamaica	123. Solomon Islands	165. Mozambique
39. Bahrain	81. Tunisia	124. Cambodia	166. Burundi
40. Portugal	82. Jordan	125. Pakistan	167. Niger
41. Poland	83. Turkey	126. Congo RC	168. Congo DRC
42. Barbados	84. Algeria	127. Sao Tome and Principe	169. Zimbabwe
	85. Tonga		

Methodology:

For more information about the methodology used to calculate the HDI, please see the "Source Materials" in the appendices of this Country Review.

Reference:

As published in United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report 2010.

Source:

United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index available at URL: http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/

Updated:

Uploaded in 2011 using ranking available; reviewed in 2015

Life Satisfaction Index

Life Satisfaction Index

Life Satisfaction Index

Created by Adrian G. White, an Analytic Social Psychologist at the University of Leicester, the "Satisfaction with Life Index" measures subjective life satisfaction across various countries. The data was taken from a metastudy (see below for source) and associates the notion of subjective happiness or life satisfaction with qualitative parameters such as health, wealth, and access to basic education. This assessment serves as an alternative to other measures of happiness that tend to rely on traditional and quantitative measures of policy on quality of life, such as GNP and GDP. The methodology involved the responses of 80,000 people across the globe.

Rank	Country	Score
1	Denmark	273.4
2	Switzerland	273.33
3	Austria	260

4	Iceland	260
5	The Bahamas	256.67
6	Finland	256.67
7	Sweden	256.67
8	Iran	253.33
9	Brunei	253.33
10	Canada	253.33
11	Ireland	253.33
12	Luxembourg	253.33
13	Costa Rica	250
14	Malta	250
15	Netherlands	250
16	Antiguaand Barbuda	246.67
17	Malaysia	246.67
18	New Zealand	246.67
19	Norway	246.67
20	Seychelles	246.67
21	Saint Kitts and Nevis	246.67

22	United Arab Emirates	246.67
23	United States	246.67
24	Vanuatu	246.67
25	Venezuela	246.67
26	Australia	243.33
27	Barbados	243.33
28	Belgium	243.33
29	Dominica	243.33
30	Oman	243.33
31	Saudi Arabia	243.33
32	Suriname	243.33
33	Bahrain	240
34	Colombia	240
35	Germany	240
36	Guyana	240
37	Honduras	240
38	Kuwait	240
39	Panama	240

40	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	240
41	United Kingdom	236.67
42	Dominican Republic	233.33
43	Guatemala	233.33
44	Jamaica	233.33
45	Qatar	233.33
46	Spain	233.33
47	Saint Lucia	233.33
48	Belize	230
49	Cyprus	230
50	Italy	230
51	Mexico	230
52	Samoa	230
53	Singapore	230
54	Solomon Islands	230
55	Trinidad and Tobago	230
56	Argentina	226.67
57	Fiji	223.33

58	Israel	223.33
59	Mongolia	223.33
60	São Tomé and Príncipe	223.33
61	El Salvador	220
62	France	220
63	Hong Kong	220
64	Indonesia	220
65	Kyrgyzstan	220
66	Maldives	220
67	Slovenia	220
68	Taiwan	220
69	East Timor	220
70	Tonga	220
71	Chile	216.67
72	Grenada	216.67
73	Mauritius	216.67
74	Namibia	216.67
75	Paraguay	216.67

76	Thailand	216.67
77	Czech Republic	213.33
78	Philippines	213.33
79	Tunisia	213.33
80	Uzbekistan	213.33
81	Brazil	210
82	China	210
83	Cuba	210
84	Greece	210
85	Nicaragua	210
86	Papua New Guinea	210
87	Uruguay	210
88	Gabon	206.67
89	Ghana	206.67
90	Japan	206.67
91	Yemen	206.67
92	Portugal	203.33
93	Sri Lanka	203.33

94	Tajikistan	203.33
95	Vietnam	203.33
96	Bhutan	200
97	Comoros	196.67
98	Croatia	196.67
99	Poland	196.67
100	Cape Verde	193.33
101	Kazakhstan	193.33
102	South Korea	193.33
103	Madagascar	193.33
104	Bangladesh	190
105	Republic of the Congo	190
106	The Gambia	190
107	Hungary	190
108	Libya	190
109	South Africa	190
110	Cambodia	186.67
111	Ecuador	186.67

112	Kenya	186.67
113	Lebanon	186.67
114	Morocco	186.67
115	Peru	186.67
116	Senegal	186.67
117	Bolivia	183.33
118	Haiti	183.33
119	Nepal	183.33
120	Nigeria	183.33
121	Tanzania	183.33
122	Benin	180
123	Botswana	180
124	Guinea-Bissau	180
125	India	180
126	Laos	180
127	Mozambique	180
128	Palestinian Authority	180
129	Slovakia	180

130	Myanmar	176.67
131	Mali	176.67
132	Mauritania	176.67
133	Turkey	176.67
134	Algeria	173.33
135	Equatorial Guinea	173.33
136	Romania	173.33
137	Bosnia and Herzegovina	170
138	Cameroon	170
139	Estonia	170
140	Guinea	170
141	Jordan	170
142	Syria	170
143	Sierra Leone	166.67
144	Azerbaijan	163.33
145	Central African Republic	163.33
146	Republic of Macedonia	163.33
147	Togo	163.33

148	Zambia	163.33
149	Angola	160
150	Djibouti	160
151	Egypt	160
152	Burkina Faso	156.67
153	Ethiopia	156.67
154	Latvia	156.67
155	Lithuania	156.67
156	Uganda	156.67
157	Albania	153.33
158	Malawi	153.33
159	Chad	150
160	Côte d'Ivoire	150
161	Niger	150
162	Eritrea	146.67
163	Rwanda	146.67
164	Bulgaria	143.33
165	Lesotho	143.33

166	Pakistan	143.33
167	Russia	143.33
168	Swaziland	140
169	Georgia	136.67
170	Belarus	133.33
171	Turkmenistan	133.33
172	Armenia	123.33
173	Sudan	120
174	Ukraine	120
175	Moldova	116.67
176	Democratic Republic of the Congo	110
177	Zimbabwe	110
178	Burundi	100

Commentary:

European countries, such as Denmark, Iceland, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, Austria resided at the top of the ranking with highest levels of self-reported life satisfaction. Conversely, European countries such as Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Belarus and Ukraine ranked low on the index. African countries such as Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe and Burundi found themselves at the very bottom of the ranking, and indeed, very few African countries could be found in the top 100. Japan was at the mid-way point in the ranking, however, other Asian countries such as Brunei and Malaysia were in the top tier, while Pakistan was close to the bottom

with a low level of self-identified life satisfaction. As a region, the Middle East presented a mixed bad with Saudi Arabians reporing healthy levels of life satisfaction and Egyptians near the bottom of the ranking. As a region, Caribbean countries were ranked highly, consistently demonstrating high levels of life satisfaction. The findings showed that health was the most crucial determining factor in life satisfaction, followed by prosperity and education.

Source:

White, A. (2007). A Global Projection of Subjective Well-being: A Challenge To Positive Psychology? Psychtalk 56, 17-20. The data was extracted from a meta-analysis by Marks, Abdallah, Simms & Thompson (2006).

Uploaded:

Based on study noted above in "Source" ; reviewed in 2015

Happy Planet Index

Happy Planet Index

The Happy Planet Index (HPI) is used to measure human well-being in conjunction with environmental impact. The HPI has been compiled since 2006 by the New Economics Foundation. The index is a composite of several indicators including subjective life satisfaction, life expectancy at birth, and ecological footprint per capita.

As noted by NEFA, the HPI "reveals the ecological efficiency with which human well-being is delivered." Indeed, the index combines environmental impact with human well-being to measure the environmental efficiency with which, country by country, people live long and happy lives. The countries ranked highest by the HPI are not necessarily the ones with the happiest people overall, but the ones that allow their citizens to live long and fulfilling lives, without negatively impacting this opportunity for either future generations or citizens of other countries. Accordingly, a country like the United States will rank low on this list due to its large per capital ecological footprint, which uses more than its fair share of resources, and will likely cause planetary damage.

It should be noted that the HPI was designed to be a counterpoint to other well-established indices of countries' development, such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which measures overall

national wealth and economic development, but often obfuscates the realities of countries with stark variances between the rich and the poor. Moreover, the objective of most of the world's people is not to be wealthy but to be happy. The HPI also differs from the Human Development Index (HDI), which measures quality of life but not ecology, since it [HPI] also includes sustainability as a key indicator.

Rank	Country	HPI
1	Costa Rica	76.1
2	Dominican Republic	71.8
3	Jamaica	70.1
4	Guatemala	68.4
5	Vietnam	66.5
6	Colombia	66.1
7	Cuba	65.7
8	El Salvador	61.5
9	Brazil	61.0
10	Honduras	61.0
11	Nicaragua	60.5
12	Egypt	60.3
13	Saudi Arabia	59.7

14	Philippines	59.0
15	Argentina	59.0
16	Indonesia	58.9
17	Bhutan	58.5
18	Panama	57.4
19	Laos	57.3
20	China	57.1
21	Morocco	56.8
22	Sri Lanka	56.5
23	Mexico	55.6
24	Pakistan	55.6
25	Ecuador	55.5
26	Jordan	54.6
27	Belize	54.5
28	Peru	54.4
29	Tunisia	54.3
30	Trinidad and Tobago	54.2
31	Bangladesh	54.1

32	Moldova	54.1
33	Malaysia	54.0
34	Tajikistan	53.5
35	India	53.0
36	Venezuela	52.5
37	Nepal	51.9
38	Syria	51.3
39	Burma	51.2
40	Algeria	51.2
41	Thailand	50.9
42	Haiti	50.8
43	Netherlands	50.6
44	Malta	50.4
45	Uzbekistan	50.1
46	Chile	49.7
47	Bolivia	49.3
48	Armenia	48.3
49	Singapore	48.2

50	Yemen	48.1
51	Germany	48.1
52	Switzerland	48.1
53	Sweden	48.0
54	Albania	47.9
55	Paraguay	47.8
56	Palestinian Authority	47.7
57	Austria	47.7
58	Serbia	47.6
59	Finland	47.2
60	Croatia	47.2
61	Kyrgyzstan	47.1
62	Cyprus	46.2
63	Guyana	45.6
64	Belgium	45.4
65	Bosnia and Herzegovina	45.0
66	Slovenia	44.5
67	Israel	44.5

68	South Korea	44.4
69	Italy	44.0
70	Romania	43.9
71	France	43.9
72	Georgia	43.6
73	Slovakia	43.5
74	United Kingdom	43.3
75	Japan	43.3
76	Spain	43.2
77	Poland	42.8
78	Ireland	42.6
79	Iraq	42.6
80	Cambodia	42.3
81	Iran	42.1
82	Bulgaria	42.0
83	Turkey	41.7
84	Hong Kong	41.6
85	Azerbaijan	41.2

86	Lithuania	40.9
87	Djibouti	40.4
88	Norway	40.4
89	Canada	39.4
90	Hungary	38.9
91	Kazakhstan	38.5
92	Czech Republic	38.3
93	Mauritania	38.2
94	Iceland	38.1
95	Ukraine	38.1
96	Senegal	38.0
97	Greece	37.6
98	Portugal	37.5
99	Uruguay	37.2
100	Ghana	37.1
101	Latvia	36.7
102	Australia	36.6
103	New Zealand	36.2

104	Belarus	35.7
105	Denmark	35.5
106	Mongolia	35.0
107	Malawi	34.5
108	Russia	34.5
109	Chad	34.3
110	Lebanon	33.6
111	Macedonia	32.7
112	Republic of the Congo	32.4
113	Madagascar	31.5
114	United States	30.7
115	Nigeria	30.3
116	Guinea	30.3
117	Uganda	30.2
118	South Africa	29.7
119	Rwanda	29.6
120	Democratic Republic of the Congo	29.0
121	Sudan	28.5

122	Luxembourg	28.5
123	United Arab Emirates	28.2
124	Ethiopia	28.1
125	Kenya	27.8
126	Cameroon	27.2
127	Zambia	27.2
128	Kuwait	27.0
129	Niger	26.9
130	Angola	26.8
131	Estonia	26.4
132	Mali	25.8
133	Mozambique	24.6
134	Benin	24.6
135	Togo	23.3
136	Sierra Leone	23.1
137	Central African Republic	22.9
138	Burkina Faso	22.4
139	Burundi	21.8

140	Namibia	21.1
141	Botswana	20.9
142	Tanzania	17.8
143	Zimbabwe	16.6

Source: This material is derived from the Happy Planet Index issued by the New Economics Foundation (NEF).

Methodology: The methodology for the calculations can be found at URL: http://www.happyplanetindex.org/

Status of Women

Gender Related Development Index (GDI) Rank:
118th out of 140

Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) Rank:
Not Ranked

Female Population:
1.6 million

Female Life Expectancy at birth:
54.3 years

Total Fertility Rate:
5.9

Maternal Mortality Ratio (2000):
1,000

Total Number of Women Living with HIV/AIDS:
3,300-13,000

Ever Married Women, Ages 15-19 (%):
28%

Mean Age at Time of Marriage:
22

Contraceptive Use Among Married Women, Any Method (%):
8%

Female Adult Literacy Rate:
41.7%

Combined Female Gross enrollment ratio for Primary, Secondary and Tertiary schools:
43%

Female-Headed Households (%):
29%

Economically Active Females (%):
63.1%

Female Contributing Family Workers (%):
N/A

Female Estimated Earned Income:
$1,269

Seats in Parliament held by women (%):
Lower or Single House: 3.7%
Upper House or Senate: 5.4%

Year Women Received the Right to Vote:
1961

Year Women Received the Right to Stand for Election:
1961

*The Gender Development Index (GDI) is a composite index which measures the average achievement in a country. While very similar to the Human Development Index in its use of the

same variables, the GDI adjusts the average achievement of each country in terms of life expectancy, enrollment in schools, income, and literacy in accordance to the disparities between males and females.

*The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) is a composite index measuring gender inequality in three of the basic dimensions of empowerment; economic participation and decision-making, political participation and decision-making, and power over economic resources.

*Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is defined as the average number of babies born to women during their reproductive years. A TFR of 2.1 is considered the replacement rate; once a TFR of a population reaches 2.1 the population will remain stable assuming no immigration or emigration takes place. When the TFR is greater than 2.1 a population will increase and when it is less than 2.1 a population will eventually decrease, although due to the age structure of a population it will take years before a low TFR is translated into lower population.

*Maternal Mortality Rate is the number of deaths to women per 100,000 live births that resulted from conditions related to pregnancy and or delivery related complications.

*Economically Active Females are the share of the female population, ages 15 and above, whom supply, or are able to supply, labor for the production of goods and services.

*Female Contributing Family Workers are those females who work without pay in an economic enterprise operated by a relative living in the same household.

*Estimated Earned Income is measured according to Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) in US dollars.

Global Gender Gap Index

Global Gender Gap Index

Editor's Note:

The Global Gender Gap Index by the World Economic Forum ranks most of the world's countries in terms of the division of resources and opportunities among males and females. Specifically, the ranking assesses the gender inequality gap in these four arenas:

1. Economic participation and opportunity (salaries and high skilled employment participation

levels)

2. Educational attainment (access to basic and higher level education)

3. Political empowerment (representation in decision-making structures)

4. Health and survival (life expectancy and sex ratio)

Country	2010 rank	2010 score	2010 rank among 2009 countries	2009 rank	2009 score	2008 rank	2008 score	2007 rank
Iceland	1	0.8496	1	1	0.8276	4	0.7999	4
Norway	2	0.8404	2	3	0.8227	1	0.8239	2
Finland	3	0.8260	3	2	0.8252	2	0.8195	3
Sweden	4	0.8024	4	4	0.8139	3	0.8139	1
New Zealand	5	0.7808	5	5	0.7880	5	0.7859	5
Ireland	6	0.7773	6	8	0.7597	8	0.7518	9
Denmark	7	0.7719	7	7	0.7628	7	0.7538	8
Lesotho	8	0.7678	8	10	0.7495	16	0.7320	26
Philippines	9	0.7654	9	9	0.7579	6	0.7568	6
Switzerland	10	0.7562	10	13	0.7426	14	0.7360	40
Spain	11	0.7554	11	17	0.7345	17	0.7281	10

South Africa	12	0.7535	12	6	0.7709	22	0.7232	20
Germany	13	0.7530	13	12	0.7449	11	0.7394	7
Belgium	14	0.7509	14	33	0.7165	28	0.7163	19
United Kingdom	15	0.7460	15	15	0.7402	13	0.7366	11
Sri Lanka	16	0.7458	16	16	0.7402	12	0.7371	15
Netherlands	17	0.7444	17	11	0.7490	9	0.7399	12
Latvia	18	0.7429	18	14	0.7416	10	0.7397	13
United States	19	0.7411	19	31	0.7173	27	0.7179	31
Canada	20	0.7372	20	25	0.7196	31	0.7136	18
Trinidad and Tobago	21	0.7353	21	19	0.7298	19	0.7245	46
Mozambique	22	0.7329	22	26	0.7195	18	0.7266	43
Australia	23	0.7271	23	20	0.7282	21	0.7241	17
Cuba	24	0.7253	24	29	0.7176	25	0.7195	22
Namibia	25	0.7238	25	32	0.7167	30	0.7141	29
Luxembourg	26	0.7231	26	63	0.6889	66	0.6802	58
Mongolia	27	0.7194	27	22	0.7221	40	0.7049	62

Costa Rica	28	0.7194	28	27	0.7180	32	0.7111	28
Argentina	29	0.7187	29	24	0.7211	24	0.7209	33
Nicaragua	30	0.7176	30	49	0.7002	71	0.6747	90
Barbados	31	0.7176	31	21	0.7236	26	0.7188	n/a
Portugal	32	0.7171	32	46	0.7013	39	0.7051	37
Uganda	33	0.7169	33	40	0.7067	43	0.6981	50
Moldova	34	0.7160	34	36	0.7104	20	0.7244	21
Lithuania	35	0.7132	35	30	0.7175	23	0.7222	14
Bahamas	36	0.7128	36	28	0.7179	n/a	n/a	n/a
Austria	37	0.7091	37	42	0.7031	29	0.7153	27
Guyana	38	0.7090	38	35	0.7108	n/a	n/a	n/a
Panama	39	0.7072	39	43	0.7024	34	0.7095	38
Ecuador	40	0.7072	40	23	0.7220	35	0.7091	44
Kazakhstan	41	0.7055	41	47	0.7013	45	0.6976	32
Slovenia	42	0.7047	42	52	0.6982	51	0.6937	49
Poland	43	0.7037	43	50	0.6998	49	0.6951	60
Jamaica	44	0.7037	44	48	0.7013	44	0.6980	39
Russian Federation	45	0.7036	45	51	0.6987	42	0.6994	45

France	46	0.7025	46	18	0.7331	15	0.7341	51
Estonia	47	0.7018	47	37	0.7094	37	0.7076	30
Chile	48	0.7013	48	64	0.6884	65	0.6818	86
Macedonia, FYR	49	0.6996	49	53	0.6950	53	0.6914	35
Bulgaria	50	0.6983	50	38	0.7072	36	0.7077	25
Kyrgyz Republic	51	0.6973	51	41	0.7058	41	0.7045	70
Israel	52	0.6957	52	45	0.7019	56	0.6900	36
Croatia	53	0.6939	53	54	0.6944	46	0.6967	16
Honduras	54	0.6927	54	62	0.6893	47	0.6960	68
Colombia	55	0.6927	55	56	0.6939	50	0.6944	24
Singapore	56	0.6914	56	84	0.6664	84	0.6625	77
Thailand	57	0.6910	57	59	0.6907	52	0.6917	52
Greece	58	0.6908	58	85	0.6662	75	0.6727	72
Uruguay	59	0.6897	59	57	0.6936	54	0.6907	78
Peru	60	0.6895	60	44	0.7024	48	0.6959	75
China	61	0.6881	61	60	0.6907	57	0.6878	73
Botswana	62	0.6876	62	39	0.7071	63	0.6839	53

Ukraine	63	0.6869	63	61	0.6896	62	0.6856	57
Venezuela	64	0.6863	64	69	0.6839	59	0.6875	55
Czech Republic	65	0.6850	65	74	0.6789	69	0.6770	64
Tanzania	66	0.6829	66	73	0.6797	38	0.7068	34
Romania	67	0.6826	67	70	0.6805	70	0.6763	47
Malawi	68	0.6824	68	76	0.6738	81	0.6664	87
Paraguay	69	0.6804	69	66	0.6868	100	0.6379	69
Ghana	70	0.6782	70	80	0.6704	77	0.6679	63
Slovak Republic	71	0.6778	71	68	0.6845	64	0.6824	54
Vietnam	72	0.6776	72	71	0.6802	68	0.6778	42
Dominican Republic	73	0.6774	73	67	0.6859	72	0.6744	65
Italy	74	0.6765	74	72	0.6798	67	0.6788	84
Gambia, The	75	0.6762	75	75	0.6752	85	0.6622	95
Bolivia	76	0.6751	76	82	0.6693	80	0.6667	80
Brueni Darussalem	77	0.6748	77	94	0.6524	99	0.6392	n/a
Albania	78	0.6726	78	91	0.6601	87	0.6591	66

Hungary	79	0.6720	79	65	0.6879	60	0.6867	61
Madagascar	80	0.6713	80	77	0.6732	74	0.6736	89
Angola	81	0.6712	81	106	0.6353	114	0.6032	110
Bangladesh	82	0.6702	82	93	0.6526	90	0.6531	100
Malta	83	0.6695	83	88	0.6635	83	0.6634	76
Armenia	84	0.6669	84	90	0.6619	78	0.6677	71
Brazil	85	0.6655	85	81	0.6695	73	0.6737	74
Cyprus	86	0.6642	86	79	0.6706	76	0.6694	82
Indonesia	87	0.6615	87	92	0.6580	93	0.6473	81
Georgia	88	0.6598	88	83	0.6680	82	0.6654	67
Tajikistan	89	0.6598	89	86	0.6661	89	0.6541	79
El Salvador	90	0.6596	90	55	0.6939	58	0.6875	48
Mexico	91	0.6577	91	98	0.6503	97	0.6441	93
Zimbabwe	92	0.6574	92	95	0.6518	92	0.6485	88
Belize	93	0.6536	93	87	0.6636	86	0.6610	94
Japan	94	0.6524	94	101	0.6447	98	0.6434	91
Mauritius	95	0.6520	95	96	0.6513	95	0.6466	85
Kenya	96	0.6499	96	97	0.6512	88	0.6547	83

Cambodia	97	0.6482	97	104	0.6410	94	0.6469	98
Malaysia	98	0.6479	98	100	0.6467	96	0.6442	92
Maldives	99	0.6452	99	99	0.6482	91	0.6501	99
Azerbaijan	100	0.6446	100	89	0.6626	61	0.6856	59
Senegal	101	0.6414	101	102	0.6427	n/a	n/a	n/a
Suriname	102	0.6407	102	78	0.6726	79	0.6674	56
United Arab Emirates	103	0.6397	103	112	0.6198	105	0.6220	105
Korea, Rep.	104	0.6342	104	115	0.6146	108	0.6154	97
Kuwait	105	0.6318	105	105	0.6356	101	0.6358	96
Zambia	106	0.6293	106	107	0.6310	106	0.6205	101
Tunisia	107	0.6266	107	109	0.6233	103	0.6295	102
Fiji	108	0.6256	108	103	0.6414	n/a	n/a	n/a
Guatemala	109	0.6238	109	111	0.6209	112	0.6072	106
Bahrain	110	0.6217	110	116	0.6136	121	0.5927	115
Burkina Faso	111	0.6162	111	120	0.6081	115	0.6029	117
India	112	0.6155	112	114	0.6151	113	0.6060	114
Mauritania	113	0.6152	113	119	0.6103	110	0.6117	111

Cameroon	114	0.6110	114	118	0.6108	117	0.6017	116
Nepal	115	0.6084	115	110	0.6213	120	0.5942	125
Lebanon*	116	0.6084	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Qatar	117	0.6059	116	125	0.5907	119	0.5948	109
Nigeria	118	0.6055	117	108	0.6280	102	0.6339	107
Algeria	119	0.6052	118	117	0.6119	111	0.6111	108
Jordan	120	0.6048	119	113	0.6182	104	0.6275	104
Ethiopia	121	0.6019	120	122	0.5948	122	0.5867	113
Oman	122	0.5950	121	123	0.5938	118	0.5960	119
Iran	123	0.5933	122	128	0.5839	116	0.6021	118
Syria	124	0.5926	123	121	0.6072	107	0.6181	103
Egypt	125	0.5899	124	126	0.5862	124	0.5832	120
Turkey	126	0.5876	125	129	0.5828	123	0.5853	121
Morocco	127	0.5767	126	124	0.5926	125	0.5757	122
Benin	128	0.5719	127	131	0.5643	126	0.5582	123
Saudi Arabia	129	0.5713	128	130	0.5651	128	0.5537	124
Côte d'Ivoire*	130	0.5691	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Mali	131	0.5680	129	127	0.5860	109	0.6117	112

Pakistan	132	0.5465	130	132	0.5458	127	0.5549	126
Chad	133	0.5330	131	133	0.5417	129	0.5290	127
Yemen	134	0.4603	132	134	0.4609	130	0.4664	128
Belarus	n/a	n/a	n/a	34	0.7141	33	0.7099	23
Uzbekistan	n/a	n/a	n/a	58	0.6913	55	0.6906	41

*new country 2010

Commentary:

According to the report's index, Nordic countries, such as Iceland, Norway, Finland, and Sweden have continued to dominate at the top of the ranking for gender equality. Meanwhile, France has seen a notable decline in the ranking, largely as a result of decreased number of women holding ministerial portfolios in that country. In the Americas, the United States has risen in the ranking to top the region, predominantly as a result of a decreasing wage gap, as well as higher number of women holding key positions in the current Obama administration. Canada has continued to remain as one of the top ranking countries of the Americas, followed by the small Caribbean island nation of Trinidad and Tobago, which has the distinction of being among the top three countries of the Americans in the realm of gender equality. Lesotho and South African ranked highly in the index, leading not only among African countries but also in global context. Despite Lesotho still lagging in the area of life expectancy, its high ranking was attributed to high levels of female participation in the labor force and female literacy. The Philippines and Sri Lanka were the top ranking countries for gender equality for Asia, ranking highly also in global context.   The Philippines has continued to show strong performance in all strong performance on all four dimensions (detailed above) of the index. Finally, in the Arab world, the United Arab Emirates held the highest-rank within that region of the world; however, its placement near the bottom of the global list highlights the fact that Arab countries are generally poor performers when it comes to the matter of gender equality in global scope.

Source:

This data is derived from the latest edition of The Global Gender Gap Report by the World Economic Forum.

Available at URL:

http://www.weforum.org/en/Communities/Women%20Leaders%20and%20Gender%20Parity/Gende

Updated:

Based on latest available data as set forth in chart; reviewed in 2014

Culture and Arts

Content coming soon.

Etiquette

Cultural Dos and Taboos

1. Women and men should dress modestly. Women are especially urged to make sure shoulders, midriff, and legs are covered.

2. Never offer a Muslim a gift of alcohol or pork.

3. The left hand is taboo. Never give or take anything with the left hand.

4. Never expose the heel of the foot to a Muslim.

5. Always remove shoes before entering a home or mosque.

6. Woman and men must not flirt with each other. Married couples should not openly display affection.

7. Always respect the Islamic times of prayer.

Travel Information

Please Note:

This is a generalized travel guide and it is intended to coalesce several resources, which a traveler might find useful, regardless of a particular destination. As such, it does not include travel warnings for specific "hot spot" destinations.

For travel alerts and warnings, please see the United States Department of State's listings available at URL:
http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings.html

Please note that travel to the following countries, based on these warnings, is ill-advised, or should be undertaken with the utmost precaution:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Honduras, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, North Korea, Pakistan, Palestinian Territories of West Bank and Gaza, Philippines areas of Sulu Archipelago, Mindanao, and southern Sulu Sea, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, Venezuela, and Yemen.

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Please Note:

The U.S. Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of traveling to Mauritania, and urges those who travel to Mauritania to exercise extreme caution because of activities by terrorist groups in the region, including al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). AQIM continues to demonstrate its intent and ability to conduct attacks against foreign nationals, including U.S. citizens. This replaces the travel warning for Mauritania, issued March 12, 2014, to update information on security incidents and remind travelers of security concerns.

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International Travel Guide

Checklist for Travelers

1. Take out travel insurance to cover hospital treatment or medical evacuation. Overseas medical costs are expensive to most international travelers, where one's domestic, nationalized or even private health insurance plans will not provide coverage outside one's home country. Learn about "reciprocal insurance plans" that some international health care companies might offer.
2. Make sure that one's travel insurance is appropriate. If one intends to indulge in adventurous activities, such as parasailing, one should be sure that one is fully insured in such cases. Many traditional insurance policies do not provide coverage in cases of extreme circumstances.
3. Take time to learn about one's destination country and culture. Read and learn about the place one is traveling. Also check political, economic and socio-cultural developments at the destination by reading country-specific travel reports and fact sheets noted below.
4. Get the necessary visas for the country (or countries) one intends to visit - but be aware that a visa does not guarantee entry. A number of useful sites regarding visa and other entry requirements are noted below.
5. Keep in regular contact with friends and relatives back at home by phone or email, and be sure to leave a travel itinerary.
6. Protect one's personal information by making copies of one's passport details, insurance policy, travelers checks and credit card numbers. Taking copies of such documents with you, while leaving another collection copies with someone at home is also good practice for travelers. Taking copies of one's passport photograph is also recommended.
7. Stay healthy by taking all possible precautions against illness. Also, be sure to take extra supplies of prescription drugs along for the trip, while also taking time to pack general pharmaceutical

supplies, such as aspirin and other such painkillers, bandages, stomach ailment medication, anti-inflammatory medication and anti-bacterial medication.

8. Do not carry illicit drugs. Understand that the punishment for possession or use of illegal drugs in some countries may be capital punishment. Make sure your prescription drugs are legal in the countries you plan to visit.

9. Know the laws of one's destination country and culture; be sure to understand the repercussions of breaking those laws and regulations. Often the transparency and freedoms of the juridical system at home is not consistent with that of one's destination country. Become aware of these complexities and subtleties before you travel.

10. For longer stays in a country, or where the security situation is volatile, one should register one's self and traveling companions at the local embassy or consulate of one's country of citizenship.

11. Women should take care to be prepared both culturally and practically for traveling in a different country and culture. One should be sure to take sufficient supplies of personal feminine products and prescription drugs. One should also learn about local cultural standards for women, including norms of dressing. Be aware that it is simply inappropriate and unsafe for women to travel alone in some countries, and take the necessary precautions to avoid risk-filled situations.

12. If one is traveling with small children, one should pack extra supplies, make arrangements with the travel carrier for proper seating that would adequately accommodate children, infants or toddlers. Note also that whether one is male of female, traveling with children means that one's hands are thus not free to carry luggage and bags. Be especially aware that this makes one vulnerable to pickpockets, thieves and other sorts of crime.

13. Make proper arrangements for accommodations, well in advance of one's arrival at a destination. Some countries have limited accommodation, while others may have culturally distinctive facilities. Learning about these practicalities before one travels will greatly aid the enjoyment of one's trip.

14. Travel with different forms of currency and money (cash, traveler's checks and credit cards) in anticipation that venues may not accept one or another form of money. Also, ensuring that one's financial resources are not contained in one location, or by one person (if one is traveling with others) can be a useful measure, in the event that one loses a wallet or purse.

15. Find out about transportation in the destination country. In some places, it might be advisable to hire a local driver or taxi guide for safety reasons, while in other countries, enjoying one's travel experience may well be enhanced by renting a vehicle and seeing the local sights and culture independently. Costs may also be prohibitive for either of these choices, so again, prior planning is suggested.

Tips for Travelers

A passport and a visa are required, as is evidence of a yellow fever vaccination.

In an effort to prevent international child abduction, many governments have initiated procedures at entry/exit points. These often include requiring documentary evidence of relationship and permission for the child's travel from the parent(s) or legal guardian not present. Having such documentation on hand, even if not required, may facilitate entry/departure.

As a result of a past border conflict between Morocco and Western Sahara, there are reports of unexploded landmines in areas of Mauritania adjacent to Western Sahara. Exploding mines are occasionally reported and have caused death and injury. In addition, groups of tourists have been held up and robbed along the borders with Morocco and Algeria. Surface travel between Mali and Mauritania can be dangerous, as the border region has historically been plagued by banditry. In 1999, thirteen Mauritanians and Malians were killed in a border clash, prompting the establishment of a special Mauritanian-Malian-Senegalese police coordination program force to provide greater border security. Groups traveling to the Moroccan, Algerian, or Malian borders should check with their embassy and/or local authorities to inform them of their itineraries and check the advisability of the planned trip routes.

The beach area around Nouakchott should be avoided at night. During the day, beach-goers should travel in large groups or stay in popular areas, as there have been a number of incidents of theft and violence in the past two years.

Political gatherings and street demonstrations have been known to occur periodically. During periods of political unrest, students frequently throw rocks at passing cars. Due to the potential for violence, you should avoid crowds, political rallies and marches, as well as the University and other schools.

Surface travel between Mauritania and Senegal is restricted to various designated border crossing-points: N'Diago, Diama, Rosso, Jerd El Mohguen, Tekane, Lekseiba, Boghe, M'Bagne, Kaedi, Tifounde Cive, Maghama, and Goraye.

Crime in Mauritania is on the rise. Most incidents involve petty crime, such as pick-pocketing and crimes of opportunity which often result from improperly secured valuables left in plain sight inside a vehicle. Residential burglaries, robberies, and assaults also occur. Violent crimes and crimes involving the use of weapons are rare, but increasing. In remote areas, renting a vehicle and hiring a driver is advisable. When renting a vehicle, keep all doors and windows closed and locked while driving.

Although foreign citizens are generally welcomed in Mauritania, there were reports of anti-Western incidents (threats and stoning of vehicles) following the 1998 U.S. and British-led intervention in Iraq. Some Muslim extremists have occasionally perceived Christian non-governmental organizations as a threat. However, political violence and religious extremist groups are closely monitored by local authorities and, to date, have not posed a direct threat to Western interests in

Mauritania.

The loss or theft abroad of a passport should be reported immediately to the nearest appropriate embassy or consulate.

Medical facilities in Mauritania are limited. At local pharmacies, some medicines are difficult to obtain; travelers are advised to bring their own supplies.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, you should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to your country can be very expensive. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses you incur. Some insurance policies also include coverage for psychiatric treatment and for disposition of remains in the event of death.

While in a foreign country, you may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in your country. The information below concerning Mauritania is provided for general reference only and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Safety of Public Transportation: Poor
Urban Road Conditions/Maintenance: Fair to Poor
Rural Road Conditions/Maintenance: Poor to Nonexistent
Availability of Roadside Assistance: Poor to Nonexistent

Road conditions in Mauritania are generally poor, particularly in the interior, and overland travel is difficult. The country's size and harsh climate make road maintenance and repair especially problematic. Mauritania possesses only about 2,070 km (1,286 miles) of surfaced roads, 710 km (441 miles) of unsurfaced roads and 5,140 km (3,194 miles) of unimproved tracks. There are four major roads, each of which links important cities in Mauritania: Nouakchott and Rosso; Nouakchott and Akjoujt; Aleg Boghe and Kaedi; and Nouakchott and Nema (the Road of Hope). Americans traveling overland for long distances in Mauritania should be sure to have an suitable four-wheel drive vehicle, a local guide, an adequate supply of water, and a second fuel reservoir. A second vehicle is recommended in case of breakdown. Visitors are urged not to travel alone into the desert.

Many Mauritanians drive without any regard to traffic signs or rules. Drivers and passengers should exercise great caution and wear seat belts at all times. Motorcycle and bicycle riders should wear helmets and protective clothing.

While in a foreign country, you are subject to that country's laws and regulations. Persons violating

Mauritanian law, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Mauritania are strict, and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and heavy fines.

Local currency may not be imported or exported. Credit cards, primarily American Express, can only be used at a few hotels in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou.

Note: This information is directly quoted from the United States Department of State Consular Information Sheet.

Sources: *United States Department of State Consular Information Sheet*

Business Culture: Information for Business Travelers

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 your country. Meals are never shared on a "Dutch treat" basis.

Sources: *United States Department of State Commercial Guides*

Online Resources Regarding Entry Requirements and Visas

Foreign Entry Requirements for Americans from the United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html

Visa Services for Non-Americans from the United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html

Visa Bulletins from the United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/bulletin/bulletin_1360.html

Visa Waivers from the United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/without/without_1990.html - new

Passport and Visa Information from the Government of the United Kingdom
http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/

Visa Information from the Government of Australia
http://www.dfat.gov.au/visas/index.html

Passport Information from the Government of Australia
https://www.passports.gov.au/Web/index.aspx

Passport Information from the Government of Canada
http://www.voyage.gc.ca/preparation_information/passport_passeport-eng.asp

Visa Information from the Government of Canada
http://www.voyage.gc.ca/preparation_information/visas-eng.asp

Online Visa Processing by Immigration Experts by VisaPro
http://www.visapro.com

Sources: United States Department of State, United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Government of Australia: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Government of Canada Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

Useful Online Resources for Travelers

Country-Specific Travel Information from United States
http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html

Travel Advice by Country from Government of United Kingdom
http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by-country/

General Travel Advice from Government of Australia
http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/General

Travel Bulletins from the Government of Australia

http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/TravelBulletins/

Travel Tips from Government of Australia
http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/tips/index.html

Travel Checklist by Government of Canada
http://www.voyage.gc.ca/preparation_information/checklist_sommaire-eng.asp

Travel Checklist from Government of United Kingdom
http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/staying-safe/checklist

Your trip abroad from United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/brochures/brochures_1225.html

A safe trip abroad from United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety_1747.html

Tips for expatriates abroad from United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/travel/living/residing/residing_1235.html

Tips for students from United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/travel/living/studying/studying_1238.html http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/broch

Medical information for travelers from United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health/health_1185.html

US Customs Travel information
http://www.customs.gov/xp/cgov/travel/

Sources: United States Department of State; United States Customs Department, United Kingdom
Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Government of Australia;
Government of Canada: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

Other Practical Online Resources for Travelers

Foreign Language Phrases for Travelers
http://www.travlang.com/languages/
http://www.omniglot.com/language/phrases/index.htm

World Weather Forecasts

http://www.intellicast.com/
http://www.wunderground.com/
http://www.worldweather.org/

Worldwide Time Zones, Map, World Clock
http://www.timeanddate.com/
http://www.worldtimezone.com/

International Airport Codes
http://www.world-airport-codes.com/

International Dialing Codes
http://www.kropla.com/dialcode.htm
http://www.countrycallingcodes.com/

International Phone Guide
http://www.kropla.com/phones.htm

International Mobile Phone Guide
http://www.kropla.com/mobilephones.htm

International Internet Café Search Engine
http://cybercaptive.com/

Global Internet Roaming
http://www.kropla.com/roaming.htm

World Electric Power Guide
http://www.kropla.com/electric.htm
http://www.kropla.com/electric2.htm

World Television Standards and Codes
http://www.kropla.com/tv.htm
International Currency Exchange Rates
http://www.xe.com/ucc/

Banking and Financial Institutions Across the World
http://www.123world.com/banks/index.html

International Credit Card or Automated Teller Machine (ATM) Locator
http://visa.via.infonow.net/locator/global/

http://www.mastercard.com/us/personal/en/cardholderservices/atmlocations/index.html

International Chambers of Commerce
http://www.123world.com/chambers/index.html

World Tourism Websites
http://123world.com/tourism/

Diplomatic and Consular Information

United States Diplomatic Posts Around the World
http://www.usembassy.gov/

United Kingdom Diplomatic Posts Around the World
http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-the-fco/embassies-and-posts/find-an-embassy-overseas/

Australia's Diplomatic Posts Around the World
http://www.dfat.gov.au/missions/
http://www.dfat.gov.au/embassies.html

Canada's Embassies and High Commissions
http://www.international.gc.ca/ciw-cdm/embassies-ambassades.aspx

Resources for Finding Embassies and other Diplomatic Posts Across the World
http://www.escapeartist.com/embassy1/embassy1.htm

Safety and Security

Travel Warnings by Country from Government of Australia
http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/

Travel Warnings and Alerts from United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html
http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/pa/pa_1766.html

Travel Reports and Warnings by Government of Canada
http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries_pays/menu-eng.asp
http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries_pays/updates_mise-a-jour-eng.asp

Travel Warnings from Government of United Kingdom
http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by-country/
http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by-country/?
action=noTravelAll#noTravelAll

Sources: United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the United States Department of State, the Government of Canada: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Government of Australia: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Other Safety and Security Online Resources for Travelers

United States Department of State Information on Terrorism
http://www.state.gov/s/ct/

Government of the United Kingdom Resource on the Risk of Terrorism
http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?
pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1044011304926

Government of Canada Terrorism Guide
http://www.international.gc.ca/crime/terrorism-terrorisme.aspx?lang=eng

Information on Terrorism by Government of Australia
http://www.dfat.gov.au/icat/index.html

FAA Resource on Aviation Safety
http://www.faasafety.gov/

In-Flight Safety Information for Air Travel (by British Airways crew trainer, Anna Warman)
http://www.warman.demon.co.uk/anna/inflight.html

Hot Spots: Travel Safety and Risk Information
http://www.airsecurity.com/hotspots/HotSpots.asp

Information on Human Rights
http://www.state.gov/g/drl/hr/

Sources: The United States Department of State, the United States Customs Department, the Government of Canada, the Government of United Kingdom, the Government of Australia, the Federal Aviation Authority, Anna Warman's In-flight Website, Hot Spots Travel and Risk Information

Diseases/Health Data

Please Note: Most of the entry below constitutes a generalized health advisory, which a traveler might find useful, regardless of a particular destination.

As a supplement, however, the reader will also find below a list of countries flagged with current health notices and alerts issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).   Please note that travel to the following countries, based on these 3 levels of warnings, is ill-advised, or should be undertaken with the utmost precaution:

Level 3 (highest level of concern; avoid non-essential travel) --

Guinea - Ebola
Liberia - Ebola
Nepal - Eathquake zone
Sierra Leone - Ebola

Level 2 (intermediate level of concern; use utmost caution during travel) --

Cameroon - Polio
Somalia - Polio
Vanuatu - Tropical Cyclone zone
Throughout Middle East and Arabia Peninsula - MERS ((Middle East Respiratory Syndrome)

Level 1 (standard level of concern; use practical caution during travel) -

Australia - Ross River disease
Bosnia-Herzegovina - Measles
Brazil - Dengue Fever

Brazil - Malaria
Brazil - Zika
China - H7N9 Avian flu
Cuba - Cholera
Egypt - H5N1 Bird flu
Ethiopia - Measles
Germany - Measles
Japan - Hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD)
Kyrgyzstan - Measles
Malaysia -Dengue Fever
Mexico - Chikungunya
Mexico - Hepatitis A
Nigeria - Meningitis
Philippines - Measles
Scotland - Mumps
Singapore - Hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD)
South Korea - MERS ((Middle East Respiratory Syndrome)
Throughout Caribbean - Chikungunya
Throughout Central America - Chikungunya
Throughout South America - Chikungunya
Throughout Pacific Islands - Chikungunya

For specific information related to these health notices and alerts please see the CDC's listing available at URL:
http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices

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Health Information for Travelers to Mauritania

An outbreak of meningitis is currently occurring in several central, east, and west African countries, including Ethiopia, Chad, Cameroon, Burkino Faso, and Benin. For more information on this outbreak and recommendations, see the following sites:

Travelers' Health Information on Meningococcal Disease
(http://www.cdc.gov/travel/diseases/menin.htm)

World Health Organization Disease Outbreak News
(http://www.who.int/disease-outbreak-news/)

Food and waterborne diseases are the number one cause of illness in travelers. Travelers' diarrhea can be caused by viruses, bacteria, or parasites, which are found throughout the region and can contaminate food or water. Infections may cause diarrhea and vomiting (*E. coli, Salmonella*, cholera, and parasites), fever (typhoid fever and toxoplasmosis), or liver damage (hepatitis). Make sure your food and drinking water are safe. (See below.)

Malaria is a preventable infection that can be fatal if left untreated. Prevent infection by taking prescription antimalarial drugs and protecting yourself against mosquito bites (see below). Most travelers to malaria risk areas in this region should take mefloquine to prevent malaria. Your risk of malaria is high in all parts of these countries, including cities, except for most of the Cape Verde Islands. For more detailed information about the risk in specific locations, see Malaria in West Africa (http://www.cdc.gov/travel/regionalmalaria/wafrica.htm).

Yellow fever vaccination is recommended and may be required for entry into certain of these countries. If you travel to West Africa, the easiest and safest thing to do is get a yellow fever vaccination and a signed certificate. For detailed information, see Comprehensive Yellow Fever Vaccination Requirements (http://www.cdc.gov/travel/yelfever.htm).

Dengue, filariasis, leishmaniasis, onchocerciasis, and trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness) are diseases carried by insects that also occur in this region. Protecting yourself against insect bites (see below) will help to prevent these diseases.

Schistosomiasis, a parasitic infection, is found in fresh water in the region. Do not swim in fresh water (except in well-chlorinated swimming pools) in these countries. (For more information, please see the Swimming Precautions on the Making Travel Safe page at URL http://www.cdc.gov/travel/safety.htm.)
Because motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of injury among travelers, walk and drive defensively. Avoid nighttime travel if possible and always use seat belts.

CDC Recommends the Following Vaccines (as Appropriate for Age):

See your doctor at least 4-6 weeks before your trip to allow time for shots to take effect.

• Hepatitis A or immune globulin (IG).
• Hepatitis B, if you might be exposed to blood (for example, health-care workers), have sexual contact with the local population, stay longer than 6 months, or be exposed through medical treatment.
• Meningococcal meningitis, for travel to most of these countries (see meningitis map at URL http://www.cdc.gov/travel/meninmap.htm) from December through June.
• Yellow fever.
• Rabies, if you might be exposed to wild or domestic animals through your work or recreation.

• Typhoid, particularly if you are visiting developing countries in this region.
• As needed, booster doses for tetanus-diphtheria, measles, and a one-time dose of polio vaccine for adults. Hepatitis B vaccine is now recommended for all infants and for children ages 11-12 years who did not complete the series as infants.

To Stay Healthy, Do:

• Wash hands often with soap and water.
• Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated (bubbly) drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water, fountain drinks, and ice cubes. If this is not possible, make water safer by BOTH filtering through an "absolute 1-micron or less" filter AND adding iodine tablets to the filtered water. "Absolute 1-micron filters" are found in camping/outdoor supply stores.
• Eat only thoroughly cooked food or fruits and vegetables you have peeled yourself. Remember: boil it, cook it, peel it, or forget it.
• Take your malaria prevention medication before, during, and after travel, as directed. (See your doctor for a prescription.)
• Protect yourself from insects by remaining in well-screened areas, using repellents (applied sparingly at 4-hour intervals) and permethrin-impregnated mosquito nets, and wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants from dusk through dawn.
• To prevent fungal and parasitic infections, keep feet clean and dry, and do not go barefoot.
• Always use latex condoms to reduce the risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

To Avoid Getting Sick:

• Don't eat food purchased from street vendors.
• Don't drink beverages with ice.
• Don't eat dairy products unless you know they have been pasteurized.
• Don't share needles with anyone.
• Don't handle animals (especially monkeys, dogs, and cats), to avoid bites and serious diseases (including rabies and plague). (For more information, please see the Animal-Associated Hazards on the Making Travel Safe page.)
• Don't swim in fresh water. Salt water is usually safer. (For more information, please see the Swimming Precautions on the Making Travel Safe page.)

What You Need To Bring with You:

• Long-sleeved shirt and long pants to wear while outside whenever possible, to prevent illnesses carried by insects (e.g., malaria, dengue, filariasis, leishmaniasis, and onchocerciasis).
• Insect repellent containing DEET (diethylmethyltoluamide), in 30%-35% strength for adults and 6%-10% for children. Unless you are staying in air-conditioned or well-screened housing, purchase a bed net impregnated with the insecticide permethrin. (Bed nets can be purchased in camping or

military supply stores.)
• Over-the-counter antidiarrheal medicine to take if you have diarrhea.
• Iodine tablets and water filters to purify water if bottled water is not available. See Do's above for more details about water filters.
• Sunblock, sunglasses, hat.
• Prescription medications: make sure you have enough to last during your trip, as well as a copy of the prescription(s).

After You Return Home:

If you have visited an area where there is risk for malaria, continue taking your malaria medication weekly for 4 weeks after you leave the area.
If you become ill after your trip-even as long as a year after you return-tell your doctor where you have traveled.

For More Information:

Ask your doctor or check the CDC web sites for more information about how to protect yourself against diseases that occur in West Africa, such as:

For information about diseases-

Carried by Insects
Dengue, Malaria, Yellow Fever

Carried in Food or Water
Cholera, *Escherichia coli,* diarrhea, Hepatitis A, Schistosomiasis, Typhoid Fever

Person-to-Person Contact
Hepatitis B, HIV/AIDS

For more information about these and other diseases, please check the Diseases (http://www.cdc.gov/travel/diseases.htm) section and the Health Topics A-Z (http://www.cdc.gov/health/diseases.htm).

Note:

This country is located in the West Africa health region.

Sources:

The Center for Disease Control Destinations Website:
http://www.cdc.gov/travel/indianrg.htm

Chapter 6

Environmental Overview

Environmental Issues

Current Issues:

-overgrazing
-deforestation
-soil erosion, which is then aggravated by drought
-desertification
-very limited natural fresh water resources

Total Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Mtc):

3.7

Country Rank (GHG output):

116th

Natural Hazards:

- hot, dry, dust/sand-laden sirocco wind blows primarily in March and April
-periodic droughts

Environmental Policy

Regulation and Jurisdiction:

The regulation and protection of the environment in Mauritania is under the jurisdiction of the following:

- Ministry of Rural Development and the Environment
- Ministry of Water and Energy
- Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Economy

Major Non-Governmental Organizations:

N/A

International Environmental Accords:

Party to:

- Biodiversity
- Climate Change
- Desertification
- Hazardous Wastes
- Law of the Sea
- Nuclear Test Ban
- Ozone Layer Protection
- Ship Pollution
- Wetlands

Signed but not ratified:

- None

Kyoto Protocol Status (year ratified):

2005

Greenhouse Gas Ranking

Greenhouse Gas Ranking

GHG Emissions Rankings

Country Rank	Country
1	United States
2	China
4	Russia
5	Japan
6	India
7	Germany
8	United Kingdom
9	Canada
10	Korea, South
11	Italy

12	Mexico
13	France
14	South Africa
15	Iran
16	Indonesia
17	Australia
18	Spain
19	Brazil
20	Saudi Arabia
21	Ukraine
22	Poland
23	Taiwan
24	Turkey
25	Thailand
26	Netherlands
27	Kazakhstan
28	Malaysia
29	Egypt

30	Venezuela
31	Argentina
32	Uzbekistan
33	Czech Republic
34	Belgium
35	Pakistan
36	Romania
37	Greece
38	United Arab Emirates
39	Algeria
40	Nigeria
41	Austria
42	Iraq
43	Finland
44	Philippines
45	Vietnam
46	Korea, North
47	Israel

48	Portugal
49	Colombia
50	Belarus
51	Kuwait
52	Hungary
53	Chile
54	Denmark
55	Serbia & Montenegro
56	Sweden
57	Syria
58	Libya
59	Bulgaria
60	Singapore
61	Switzerland
62	Ireland
63	Turkmenistan
64	Slovakia
65	Bangladesh

66	Morocco
67	New Zealand
68	Oman
69	Qatar
70	Azerbaijan
71	Norway
72	Peru
73	Cuba
74	Ecuador
75	Trinidad & Tobago
76	Croatia
77	Tunisia
78	Dominican Republic
79	Lebanon
80	Estonia
81	Yemen
82	Jordan
83	Slovenia

84	Bahrain
85	Angola
86	Bosnia & Herzegovina
87	Lithuania
88	Sri Lanka
89	Zimbabwe
90	Bolivia
91	Jamaica
92	Guatemala
93	Luxembourg
94	Myanmar
95	Sudan
96	Kenya
97	Macedonia
98	Mongolia
99	Ghana
100	Cyprus
101	Moldova

102	Latvia
103	El Salvador
104	Brunei
105	Honduras
106	Cameroon
107	Panama
108	Costa Rica
109	Cote d'Ivoire
110	Kyrgyzstan
111	Tajikistan
112	Ethiopia
113	Senegal
114	Uruguay
115	Gabon
116	Albania
117	Nicaragua
118	Botswana
119	Paraguay

120	Tanzania
121	Georgia
122	Armenia
123	Congo, RC
124	Mauritius
125	Nepal
126	Mauritius
127	Nepal
128	Mauritania
129	Malta
130	Papua New Guinea
131	Zambia
132	Suriname
133	Iceland
134	Togo
135	Benin
136	Uganda
137	Bahamas

138	Haiti
139	Congo, DRC
140	Guyana
141	Mozambique
142	Guinea
143	Equatorial Guinea
144	Laos
145	Barbados
146	Niger
147	Fiji
148	Burkina Faso
149	Malawi
150	Swaziland
151	Belize
152	Afghanistan
153	Sierra Leone
154	Eritrea
155	Rwanda

156	Mali
157	Seychelles
158	Cambodia
159	Liberia
160	Bhutan
161	Maldives
162	Antigua & Barbuda
163	Djibouti
164	Saint Lucia
165	Gambia
166	Guinea-Bissau
167	Central African Republic
168	Palau
169	Burundi
170	Grenada
171	Lesotho
172	Saint Vincent & the Grenadines
173	Solomon Islands

174	Samoa
175	Cape Verde
176	Nauru
177	Dominica
178	Saint Kitts & Nevis
179	Chad
180	Tonga
181	Sao Tome & Principe
182	Comoros
183	Vanuatu
185	Kiribati
Not Ranked	Andorra
Not Ranked	East Timor
Not Ranked	Holy See
Not Ranked	Hong Kong
Not Ranked	Liechtenstein
Not Ranked	Marshall Islands
Not Ranked	Micronesia

Not Ranked	Monaco
Not Ranked	San Marino
Not Ranked	Somalia
Not Ranked	Tuvalu

* European Union is ranked 3rd
Cook Islands are ranked 184th
Niue is ranked 186th

Global Environmental Snapshot

Introduction

The countries of the world face many environmental challenges in common. Nevertheless, the nature and intensity of problem vary from region to region, as do various countries' respective capacities, in terms of affluence and infrastructure, to remediate threats to environmental quality.

Consciousness of perils affecting the global environment came to the fore in the last third or so of the 20th century has continued to intensify well into the new millennium. According to the United Nations Environment Programme, considerable environmental progress has been made at the level of institutional developments, international cooperation accords, and public participation. Approximately two-dozen international environmental protection accords with global implications have been promulgated since the late 1970s under auspices of the United Nations and other international organizations, together with many additional regional agreements. Attempts to address and rectify environmental problems take the form of legal frameworks, economic instruments, environmentally sound technologies and cleaner production processes as well as conservation efforts. Environmental impact assessments have increasingly been applied across the globe.

Environmental degradation affects the quality, or aesthetics, of human life, but it also displays potential to undermine conditions necessary for the sustainability of human life. Attitudes toward the importance of environmental protection measures reflect ambivalence derived from this bifurcation. On one hand, steps such as cleaning up pollution, dedicating parkland, and suchlike,

are seen as embellishments undertaken by wealthy societies already assured they can successfully perform those functions deemed, ostensibly, more essential-for instance, public health and education, employment and economic development. On the other hand, in poorer countries, activities causing environmental damage-for instance the land degradation effects of unregulated logging, slash-and-burn agriculture, overgrazing, and mining-can seem justified insofar as such activities provide incomes and livelihoods.

Rapid rates of resource depletion are associated with poverty and high population growth, themselves correlated, whereas consumption per capita is much higher in the most developed countries, despite these nations' recent progress in energy efficiency and conservation. It is impossible to sequester the global environmental challenge from related economic, social and political challenges.

First-tier industrialized countries have recently achieved measurable decreases in environmental pollution and the rate of resource depletion, a success not matched in middle income and developing countries. It is believed that the discrepancy is due to the fact that industrialized countries have more developed infrastructures to accommodate changes in environmental policy, to apply environmental technologies, and to invest in public education. The advanced industrialized countries incur relatively lower costs in alleviating environmental problems, in comparison to developing countries, since in the former even extensive environmental programs represent a rather minuscule percentage of total expenditures. Conversely, budget constraints, lagged provision of basic services to the population, and other factors such as debt service and militarization may preclude institution of minimal environmental protection measures in the poorest countries.

A synopsis for the current situation facing each region of the world follows:

Regional Synopsis: Africa

The African continent, the world's second-largest landmass, encompasses many of the world's least developed countries. By global standards, urbanization is comparatively low but rising at a rapid rate. More heavily industrialized areas at the northern and southern ends of the continent experience the major share of industrial pollution. In other regions the most serious environmental problems typically stem from inefficient subsistence farming methods and other forms of land degradation, which have affected an increasingly extensive area under pressure of a widely impoverished, fast-growing population. Africa's distribution of natural resources is very uneven. It is the continent at greatest risk of desertification, especially in the Sahel region at the edge of the Sahara but also in other dry-range areas. Yet at the same time, Africa also harbors some of the earth's richest and most diverse biological zones.

Key Points:

Up to half a billion hectares of African land are moderately to severely degraded, an occurrence reflecting short-fallow shifting cultivation and overgrazing as well as a climatic pattern of recurrent droughts.

Soil degradation is severe along the expanse directly south of the Sahara, from the west to the east coasts. Parts of southern Africa, central-eastern Africa, and the neighboring island of Madagascar suffer from serious soil degradation as well.

Africa contains about 17 percent of the world's forest cover, concentrated in the tropical belt of the continent. Many of the forests, however, are severely depleted, with an estimated 70 percent showing some degree of degradation.

Population growth has resulted in continuing loss of arable land, as inefficient subsistence farming techniques affect increasingly extensive areas. Efforts to implement settled, sustainable agriculture have met with some recent success, but much further progress in this direction is needed. Especially in previously uninhabited forestlands, concern over deforestation is intensifying.

By contrast, the African savanna remains the richest grassland in the world, supporting a substantial concentration of animal and plant life. Wildlife parks are sub-Saharan Africa's greatest tourist attraction, and with proper management-giving local people a stake in conservation and controlling the pace of development-could greatly enhance African economies.

Significant numbers of mammal species in parts of northern, southern and eastern Africa are currently threatened, while the biological diversity in Mauritania and Madagascar is even further compromised with over 20 percent of the mammal species in these two countries currently under threat.

With marine catch trends increasing from 500,000 metric tons in the 1950s to over 3,000,000 metric tons by 2000, there was increasing concern about the reduction in fisheries and marine life, should this trend continue unabated.

Water resource vulnerability is a major concern in northeastern Africa, and a moderate concern across the rest of the continent. An exception is central Africa, which has plentiful water supplies.

Many Africans lack adequate access to resources, not just (if at all) because the resources are unevenly distributed geographically, but also through institutional failures such as faulty land tenure systems or political upheaval. The quality of Africa's natural resources, despite their spotty distribution, is in fact extraordinarily rich. The infrastructure needed to protect and benefit from this natural legacy, however, is largely lacking.

Regional Synopsis: Asia and the Pacific

Asia-earth's largest landmass-and the many large and nearly innumerable small islands lying off its Pacific shore display extraordinarily contrasting landscapes, levels of development, and degrees of environmental stress. In the classification used here, the world's smallest continent, Australia, is also included in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Asia-Pacific region is home to 9 of the world's 14 largest urban areas, and as energy use for utilities, industry and transport increases in developing economies, urban centers are subject to worsening air quality. Intense population density in places such as Bangladesh or Hong Kong is the quintessential image many people have of Asia, yet vast desert areas such as the Gobi and the world's highest mountain range, the Himalayas, span the continent as well. Forested areas in Southeast Asia and the islands of Indonesia and the Philippines were historically prized for their tropical hardwood, but in many places this resource is now severely depleted. Low-lying small island states are extremely vulnerable to the effects of global warming, both rising sea levels and an anticipated increase in cyclones.

Key Points:

Asian timber reserves are forecast to be depleted in the next 40 years. Loss of natural forest is irreversible in some areas, but plantation programs to restore tree cover may ameliorate a portion of the resulting land degradation.

Increased usage of fossil fuels in China and other parts of southern Asia is projected to result in a marked increase in emissions, especially in regard to carbon dioxide. The increased usage of energy has led to a marked upsurge in air pollution across the region.

Acidification is an emerging problem regionally, with sulfur dioxide emissions expected to triple by 2010 if the current growth rate is sustained. China, Thailand, India, and Korea seem to be suffering from particularly high rates of acid deposition. By contrast, Asia's most highly developed economy, Japan, has effected substantial improvements in its environmental indicators.

Water pollution in the Pacific is an urgent concern since up to 70 percent of the water discharged into the region's waters receives no treatment. Additionally, the disposal of solid wastes, in like manner, poses a major threat in a region with many areas of high population density.

The Asia-Pacific region is the largest expanse of the world's land that is adversely affected by soil degradation.

The region around Australia reportedly suffers the largest degree of ozone depletion.

The microstates of the Pacific suffer land loss due to global warming, and the consequent rise in the levels of ocean waters. A high-emissions scenario and anthropogenic climate impact at the upper end of the currently predicted range would probably force complete evacuation of the lowest-elevation islands sometime in this century.

The species-rich reefs surrounding Southeast Asia are highly vulnerable to the deleterious effects of coastal development, land-based pollution, over-fishing and exploitative fishing methods, as well as marine pollution from oil spills and other activities.

With marine catch trends increasing from 5,000,000 metric tons in the 1950s to over 20,000,000 metric tons by 2000, there was increasing concern about the reduction in fisheries and marine life, should this trend continue unabated.

Significant numbers of mammal species in parts of China and south-east Asia are currently threatened, while the biological diversity in India, Japan, Australia, the Philippines, Indonesia and parts of Malaysia is even further compromised with over 20 percent of the mammal species in these countries currently under threat.

Water resource vulnerability is a serious concern in areas surrounding the Indian subcontinent.

Regional Synopsis: Central Asia

The Central Asian republics, formerly in the Soviet Union, experience a range of environmental problems as the result of poorly executed agricultural, industrial, and nuclear programs during the Soviet era. Relatively low population densities are the norm, especially since upon the breakup of the U.S.S.R. many ethnic Russians migrated back to European Russia. In this largely semi-arid region, drought, water shortages, and soil salinization pose major challenges.

Key Points:

The use of agricultural pesticides, such as DDT and other chemicals, has contributed to the contamination of soil and groundwater throughout the region.

Land and soil degradation, and in particular, increased salinization, is mostly attributable to faulty irrigation practices.

Significant desertification is also a problem in the region.

Air pollution is prevalent, mostly due to use of low octane automobile fuel.

Industrial pollution of the Caspian Sea and the Aral Sea, as a result of industrial effluents as well as mining and metal production, presents a challenge to the countries bordering these bodies of water.

One of the most severe environmental problems in the region is attributable to the several billion tons of hazardous materials stored in landfills across Central Asia.

Uzbekistan's particular problem involves the contraction of the Aral Sea, which has decreased in size by a third, as a consequence of river diversions and poor irrigation practices. The effect has been the near-total biological destruction of that body of water.

Kazakhstan, as a consequence of being the heartland of the former Soviet Union's nuclear program, has incurred a high of cancerous malignancies, biogenetic abnormalities and radioactive contamination.

While part of the Soviet Union, the republics in the region experienced very high levels of greenhouse gas emissions, as a consequence of rapid industrialization using cheap but dirty energy sources, especially coal.

By contrast, however, there have recently been substantial reductions in the level of greenhouse gas emissions, especially those attributable to coal burning, with further decreases anticipated over the next decade. These changes are partially due to the use of cleaner energy technologies, such as natural gas, augmented by governmental commitment to improving environmental standards.

Regional Synopsis: Europe

Western Europe underwent dramatic transformation of its landscape, virtually eliminating large-scale natural areas, during an era of rapid industrialization, which intensified upon its recovery from World War II. In Eastern Europe and European Russia, intensive land development has been less prevalent, so that some native forests and other natural areas remain. Air and water pollution from use of dirty fuels and industrial effluents, however, are more serious environmental problems in Eastern than in Western Europe, though recent trends show improvement in many indicators. Acid rain has inflicted heavy environmental damage across much of Europe, particularly on forests. Europe and North America are the only regions in which water usage for industry exceeds that for agriculture, although in Mediterranean nations agriculture is the largest water consumer.

Key Points:

Europe contributes 36 percent of the world's chlorofluorocarbon emissions, 30 percent of carbon dioxide emissions, and 25 percent of sulfur dioxide emissions.

Sulfur and nitrogen oxide emissions are the cause of 30 to 50 percent of Central and Eastern Europe's deforestation.

Acid rain has been an environmental concern for decades and continues to be a challenge in parts of Western Europe.

Overexploitation of up to 60 percent of Europe's groundwater presents a problem in industrial and urban areas.

With marine catch trends increasing from 5,000,000 metric tons in the 1950s to over 20,000,000 metric tons by 2000, there was increasing concern about the reduction in fisheries and marine life, should this trend continue unabated.

Significant numbers of mammal species in parts of western Europe, Eastern Europe and Russia are currently threatened, while the biological diversity on the Iberian Peninsula is even further compromised with over 40 percent of the mammal species in this region currently under threat. As a result, there has been a 10 percent increase in protected areas of Europe.

A major environmental issue for Europe involves the depletion of various already endangered or threatened species, and most significantly, the decline of fish stocks. Some estimates suggest that up to 50 percent of the continent's fish species may be considered endangered species. Coastal fisheries have been over-harvested, resulting in catch limits or moratoriums on many commercially important fish species.

Fortunately, in the last few years, these policies have started to yield measurable results with decreasing trends in marine fish catch.

Recently, most European countries have adopted cleaner production technologies, and alternative methods of waste disposal, including recycling.

The countries of Eastern Europe have made air quality a major environmental priority. This is exemplified by the Russian Federation's addition to the 1995 "Berlin Mandate" (transnational legislation based on resolutions of the Rio Earth Summit) compelling nations to promote "carbon sinks" to absorb greenhouse gases.

On a relative basis, when compared with the degree of industrial emissions emitted by many Eastern European countries until the late 1980s, there has been some marked increase in air quality in the region, as obsolete plants are closed and a transition to cleaner fuels and more efficient energy use takes place.

Regional Synopsis: The Middle and Near East

Quite possibly, the Middle East will exemplify the adage that, as the 20th century was a century fixated on oil, the 21st century will be devoted to critical decisions about water. Many (though far from all) nations in the Middle East rank among those countries with the largest oil and gas reserves, but water resources are relatively scarce throughout this predominantly dry region. Effects of global warming may cause moderately high elevation areas that now typically receive winter "snowpack" to experience mainly rain instead, which would further constrain dry-season water availability. The antiquities and religious shrines of the region render it a great magnet for tourism, which entails considerable economic growth potential but also intensifies stresses on the environment.

Key Points:

Water resource vulnerability is a serious concern across the entire region. The increased usage of, and further demand for water, has exacerbated long-standing water scarcity in the region. For instance, river diversions and industrial salt works have caused the Dead Sea to shrink by one-third from its original surface area, with further declines expected.

The oil industry in the region contributes to water pollution in the Persian Gulf, as a result of oil spills, which have averaged 1.2 million barrels of oil spilt per year (some sources suggest that this figure is understated). The consequences are severe because even after oil spills have been cleaned up, environmental damage to the food webs and ecosystems of marine life will persist for a prolonged period.

The region's coastal zone is considered one of the most fragile and endangered ecosystems of the world. Land reclamation, shoreline construction, discharge of industrial effluents, and tourism (such as diving in the Red Sea) contribute to widespread coastal damage.

Significant numbers of mammal species in parts of the Middle East are currently threatened.

Since the 1980s, 11 percent of the region's natural forest has been depleted.

Regional Synopsis: Latin America and the Caribbean

The Latin American and Caribbean region is characterized by exceedingly diverse landforms that have generally seen high rates of population growth and economic development in recent decades. The percentage of inhabitants residing in urban areas is quite high at 73.4 percent; the region

includes the megacities of Mexico City, Sao Paulo, and Rio de Janeiro. The region also includes the world's second-highest mountain range, the Andes; significant expanses of desert and grassland; the coral reefs of the Caribbean Sea; and the world's largest contiguous tropical forest in the Amazon basin. Threats to the latter from subsistence and commercial farming, mineral exploitation and timbering are well publicized. Nevertheless, of eight countries worldwide that still retain at least 70 percent of their original forest cover, six are in Latin America. The region accounts for nearly half (48.3 percent) of the world's greenhouse gas emissions derived from land clearing, but as yet a comparatively minuscule share (4.3 percent) of such gases from industrial sources.

Key Points:

Although Latin America is one of the most biologically diverse regions of the world, this biodiversity is highly threatened, as exemplified by the projected extinction of up to 100,000 species in the next few decades. Much of this loss will be concentrated in the Amazon area, although the western coastline of South America will also suffer significant depletion of biological diversity. The inventory of rainforest species with potentially useful commercial or medical applications is incomplete, but presumed to include significant numbers of such species that may become extinct before they are discovered and identified.

Up to 50 percent of the region's grazing land has lost its soil fertility as a result of soil erosion, salinization, alkalinization and overgrazing.

The Caribbean Sea, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Pacific Ocean have all been contaminated by agricultural wastes, which are discharged into streams that flow into these major waters. Water pollution derived from phosphorous, nitrates and pesticides adversely affects fish stocks, contributes to oxygen depletion and fosters overgrowth of aquatic vegetation. Marine life will continue to be severely compromised as a result of these conditions.

Due to industrial development in the region, many beaches of eastern Latin America and the Caribbean suffer from tar deposits.

Most cities in the region lack adequate sewage treatment facilities, and rapid migration of the rural poor into the cities is widening the gap between current infrastructure capacity and the much greater level needed to provide satisfactory basic services.

The rainforest region of the Amazon Basin suffers from dangerously high levels of deforestation, which may be a significant contributory factor to global warming or "the greenhouse effect." In the late 1990s and into the new millennium, the rate of deforestation was around 20 million acres of rainforest being destroyed annually.

Deforestation on the steep rainforest slopes of Caribbean islands contributes to soil erosion and

landslides, both of which then result in heavy sedimentation of nearby river systems. When these sedimented rivers drain into the sea and coral reefs, they poison the coral tissues, which are vital to the maintenance of the reef ecosystem. The result is marine degradation and nutrient depletion. Jamaica's coral reefs have never quite recovered from the effects of marine degradation.

The Southern Cone of Latin America (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay) suffers the effects of greatly increased ultraviolet-B radiation, as a consequence of more intense ozone depletion in the southern hemisphere.

Water resource vulnerability is an increasingly major concern in the northwestern portion of South America.

Regional Synopsis: North America

North American nations, in particular the United States and Canada, rank among the world's most highly developed industrial economies-a fact which has generated significant pollution problems, but also financial resources and skills that have enabled many problems to be corrected. Although efforts to promote energy efficiency, recycling, and suchlike have helped ease strains on the environment in a part of the world where per capita consumption levels are high, sprawling land development patterns and recent preferences many households have demonstrated for larger vehicles have offset these advances.

Meanwhile, a large portion of North America's original forest cover has been lost, though in many cases replaced by productive second-growth woodland. In recent years, attitudes toward best use of the region's remaining natural or scenic areas seem to be shifting toward recreation and preservation and away from resource extraction. With increasing attention on the energy scarcity in the United States, however, there is speculation that this shift may be short-lived. Indeed, the energy shortage on the west coast of the United States and associated calls for energy exploration, indicate a possible retrenchment toward resource extraction. At the same time, however, it has also served to highlight the need for energy conservation as well as alternative energy sources.

Despite generally successful anti-pollution efforts, various parts of the region continue to suffer significant air, water and land degradation from industrial, vehicular, and agricultural emissions and runoff. Mexico, as a middle-income country, displays environmental problems characteristic of a developing economy, including forest depletion, pollution from inefficient industrial processes and dirty fuels, and lack of sufficient waste-treatment infrastructure.

Key Points:

Because of significantly greater motor vehicle usage in the United States (U.S.) than in the rest of

the world, the U.S. contribution of urban air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, especially carbon dioxide, is disproportionately high in relation to its population.

Acid rain is an enduring issue of contention in the northeastern part of the United States, on the border with Canada.

Mexico's urban areas suffer extreme air pollution from carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, and other toxic air pollutants. Emissions controls on vehicles are in their infancy, compared to analogous regulations in the U.S.

The cities of Mexico, including those on the U.S. border, also discharge large quantities of untreated or poorly treated sewage, though officials are currently planning infrastructure upgrades.

Deforestation is noteworthy in various regions of the U.S., especially along the northwest coastline. Old growth forests have been largely removed, but in the northeastern and upper midwestern sections of the United States, evidence suggests that the current extent of tree cover probably surpasses the figure for the beginning of the 20th century.

Extreme weather conditions in the last few years have resulted in a high level of soil erosion along the north coast of California; in addition, the coastline itself has shifted substantially due to soil erosion and concomitant landslides.

Agricultural pollution-including nitrate contamination of well water, nutrient runoff to waterways, and pesticide exposure-is significant in various areas. Noteworthy among affected places are California's Central Valley, extensive stretches of the Midwest, and land in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Inland waterways, especially around the Great Lakes, have substantially improved their water quality, due to concentrated efforts at reducing water pollution by governmental, commercial and community representatives. Strict curbs on industrial effluents and near-universal implementation of sewage treatment are the chief factors responsible for this improvement.

A major environmental issue for Canada and the United States involves the depletion of various already endangered or threatened species, and most significantly, the decline of fish stocks. Coastal fisheries have been over-harvested, resulting in catch limits or moratoriums on many commercially important fish species. In the last few years, these policies have started to yield measurable results with decreasing trends in marine fish catch.

Due to the decay of neighboring ecosystems in Central America and the Caribbean, the sea surrounding Florida has become increasingly sedimented, contributing to marine degradation,

nutrient depletion of the ecosystem, depletion of fish stocks, and diseases to coral species in particular.

Polar Regions

Key Points:

The significant rise in sea level, amounting 10 to 25 centimeters in the last 100 years, is due to the melting of the Arctic ice sheets, and is attributed to global warming.

The Antarctic suffers from a significant ozone hole, first detected in 1976. By 1985, a British scientific team reported a 40 percent decrease in usual regeneration rates of the ozone. Because a sustained increase in the amount of ultraviolet-B radiation would have adverse consequences upon all planetary life, recent environmental measures have been put into effect, aimed at reversing ozone depletion. These measures are projected to garner significant results by 2050.

Due to air and ocean currents, the Arctic is a sink for toxic releases originally discharged thousands of miles away. Arctic wildlife and Canada's Inuit population have higher bodily levels of contaminants such as PCB and dioxin than those found in people and animals in much of the rest of the world.

Global Environmental Concepts

1. Global Warming and Greenhouse Gases

The Greenhouse Effect:

In the early 19th century, the French physicist, Jean Fourier, contended that the earth's atmosphere functions in much the same way as the glass of a greenhouse, thus describing what is now understood as the "greenhouse effect." Put simply, the "greenhouse effect" confines some of the sun's energy to the earth, preserving some of the planet's warmth, rather than allowing it to flow back into space. In so doing, all kinds of life forms can flourish on earth. Thus, the "greenhouse effect" is necessary to sustain and preserve life forms and ecosystems on earth.

In the late 19th century, a Swedish chemist, Svante Arrhenius, noticed that human activities, such as the burning of coal and other fossil fuels for heat, and the removal of forested lands for urban development, led to higher concentrations of greenhouse gases, like carbon dioxide and methane, in the atmosphere. This increase in the levels of greenhouse gases was believed to advance the "greenhouse effect" exponentially, and might be related to the trend in global warming.

In the wake of the Industrial Revolution, after industrial development took place on a large scale and the total human population burgeoned simultaneously with industrialization, the resulting increase in greenhouse gas emissions could, many scientists believe, be significant enough to have some bearing on climate. Indeed, many studies in recent years support the idea that there is a linkage between human activities and global warming, although there is less consensus on the extent to which this linkage may be relevant to environmental concerns.

That said, some scientists have argued that temperature fluctuations have existed throughout the evolution of the planet. Indeed, Dr. S. Fred Singer, the president of the Science and Environment Policy Project has noted that 3,000-year-old geological records of ocean sediment reveal changes in the surface temperature of the ocean. Hence, it is possible that climate variability is merely a normal fact of the planet's evolution. Yet even skeptics as to anthropogenic factors concur that any substantial changes in global temperatures would likely have an effect upon the earth's ecosystems, as well as the life forms that inhabit them.

The Relationship Between Global Warming and Greenhouse Gases:

A large number of climatologists believe that the increase in atmospheric concentrations of "greenhouse gas emissions," mostly a consequence of human activities such as the burning of fossil fuels, are contributing to global warming. The cause notwithstanding, the planet has reportedly warmed 0.3°C to 0.6°C over the last century. Indeed, each year during the 1990s was one of the very warmest in the 20th century, with the mean surface temperature for 1999 being the fifth warmest on record since 1880.

In early 2000, a panel of atmospheric scientists for the National Research Council concluded in a report that global warming was, indeed, a reality. While the panel, headed by Chairman John Wallace, a professor of atmospheric sciences at the University of Washington, stated that it remained unclear whether human activities have contributed to the earth's increasing temperatures, it was apparent that global warming exists.

In 2001, following a request for further study by the incoming Bush administration in the United States, the National Academy of Sciences again confirmed that global warming had been in existence for the last 20 years. The study also projected an increase in temperature between 2.5 degrees and 10.4 degrees Fahrenheit by the year 2100. Furthermore, the study found the leading

cause of global warming to be emissions of carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels, and it noted that greenhouse gas accumulations in the earth's atmosphere was a result of human activities.

Within the scientific community, the controversy regarding has centered on the difference between surface air and upper air temperatures. Information collected since 1979 suggests that while the earth's surface temperature has increased by about a degree in the past century, the atmospheric temperature five miles above the earth's surface has indicated very little increase. Nevertheless, the panel stated that this discrepancy in temperature between surface and upper air does not invalidate the conclusion that global warming is taking place. Further, the panel noted that natural events, such as volcanic eruptions, can decrease the temperature in the upper atmosphere.

The major consequences of global warming potentially include the melting of the polar ice caps, which, in turn, contribute to the rise in sea levels. Many islands across the globe have already experienced a measurable loss of land as a result. Because global warming may increase the rate of evaporation, increased precipitation, in the form of stronger and more frequent storm systems, is another potential outcome. Other consequences of global warming may include the introduction and proliferation of new infectious diseases, loss of arable land (referred to as "desertification"), destructive changes to existing ecosystems, loss of biodiversity and the isolation of species, and concomitant adverse changes in the quality of human life.

International Policy Development in Regard to Global Warming:

Regardless of what the precise nature of the relationship between greenhouse gas emissions and global warming may be, it seems that there is some degree of a connection between the phenomena. Any substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and global warming trends will likely involve systematic changes in industrial operations, the use of advanced energy sources and technologies, as well as global cooperation in implementing and regulating these transformations.

In this regard, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) stipulated the following objectives:

1. To stabilize "greenhouse gas" concentrations within the atmosphere, in such a manner that would preclude hazardous anthropogenic intervention into the existing biosphere and ecosystems of the world. This stabilization process would facilitate the natural adaptation of ecosystems to changes in climate.

2. To ensure and enable sustainable development and food production on a global scale.

*** See section on "International Environmental Agreements and Associations" for information related to international policies related to limiting greenhouse gases and controlling climate change

emanating from historic summits at Kyoto, Copenhagen, Doha, and Paris. ***

2. Air Pollution

Long before global warming reared its head as a significant issue, those concerned about the environment and public health noted the deleterious effects of human-initiated combustion upon the atmosphere. Killer smogs from coal burning triggered acute health emergencies in London and other places. At a lower level of intensity motor vehicle, power plant, and industrial emissions impaired long-range visibility and probably had some chronic adverse consequences on the respiratory systems of persons breathing such air.

In time, scientists began associating the sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides released from coal burning with significant acid deposition in the atmosphere, eventually falling as "acid rain." This phenomenon has severely degraded forestlands, especially in Europe and a few parts of the United States. It has also impaired some aquatic ecosystems and eaten away the surface of some human artifacts, such as marble monuments. Scrubber technology and conversion to cleaner fuels have enabled the level of industrial production to remain at least constant while significantly reducing acid deposition. Technologies aimed at cleaning the air and curtailing acid rain, soot, and smog may, nonetheless, boomerang as the perils of global warming become increasingly serious. In brief, these particulates act as sort of a sun shade -- comparable to the effect of volcanic eruptions on the upper atmosphere whereby periods of active volcanism correlate with temporarily cooler weather conditions. Thus, while the carbon dioxide releases that are an inevitable byproduct of combustion continue, by scrubbing the atmosphere of pollutants, an industrial society opens itself to greater insolation (penetration of the sun's rays and consequent heating), and consequently, it is likely to experience a correspondingly greater rise in ambient temperatures.

The health benefits of removing the sources of acid rain and smog are indisputable, and no one would recommend a return to previous conditions. Nevertheless, the problematic climatic effects of continually increasing emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases pose a major global environmental challenge, not as yet addressed adequately.

3. Ozone Depletion

The stratospheric ozone layer functions to prevent ultraviolet radiation from reaching the earth. Normally, stratospheric ozone is systematically disintegrated and regenerated through natural photochemical processes. The stratospheric ozone layer, however, has been depleted unnaturally as a result of anthropogenic (man-made) chemicals, most especially chlorine and bromide compounds such as chloroflorocarbons (CFCs), halons, and various industrial chemicals in the form of

solvents, refrigerants, foaming agents, aerosol propellants, fire retardants, and fumigants. Ozone depletion is of concern because it permits a greater degree of ultraviolet-B radiation to reach the earth, which then increases the incidences of cancerous malignancies, cataracts, and human immune deficiencies. In addition, even in small doses, ozone depletion affects the ecosystem by disturbing food chains, agriculture, fisheries and other forms of biological diversity.

Transnational policies enacted to respond to the dangers of ozone depletion include the 1985 Vienna Convention on the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. The Montreal Protocol was subsequently amended in London in 1990, Copenhagen in 1992 and Vienna in 1995. By 1996, 155 countries had ratified the Montreal Protocol, which sets out a time schedule for the reduction (and eventual elimination) of ozone depleting substances (OPS), and bans exports and imports of ODS from and to non-participant countries.

In general, the Protocol stipulates that developed countries must eliminate halon consumption by 1994 and CFC consumption by 1996, while developing countries must eliminate these substances by 2010. Consumption of methyl bromide, which is used as a fumigant, was to be frozen at the 1995 in developed countries, and fully eliminated in 2010, while developing countries are to freeze consumption by 2002, based on average 1995-1998 consumption levels. Methyl chloroform is to be phased out by 2005. Under the Montreal Protocol, most ODS will be completely eliminated from use by 2010.

4. Land Degradation

In recent decades, land degradation in more arid regions of the world has become a serious concern. The problem, manifest as both "desertification" and "devegetation," is caused primarily by climate variability and human activities, such as "deforestation," excessive cultivation, overgrazing, and other forms of land resource exploitation. It is also exacerbated by inadequate irrigation practices. Although the effects of droughts on drylands have been temporary in the past, today, the productivity and sustainability of these lands have been severely compromised for the long term. Indeed, in every region of the world, land degradation has become an acute issue.

Desertification and Devegetation:

"Desertification" is a process of land degradation causing the soil to deteriorate, thus losing its nutrients and fertility, and eventually resulting in the loss of vegetation, known as "devegetation." As aforementioned, "desertification" and "devegetation" are caused by human activities, yet human beings are also the greatest casualties. Because these forms of land degradation affect the ability of the soil to produce crops, they concomitantly contribute to poverty. As population increases and

demographic concentrations shift, the extent of land subject to stresses by those seeking to wrest subsistence from it has inexorably risen.

In response, the United Nations has formed the Convention to Combat Desertification-aimed at implementing programs to address the underlying causes of desertification, as well as measures to prevent and minimize its effects. Of particular significance is the formulation of policies on transboundary resources, such as areas around lakes and rivers. At a broader level, the Convention has established a Conference of Parties (COP), which includes all ratifying governments, for directing and advancing international action.

To ensure more efficacious use of funding, the Convention intends to reconfigure international aid to utilize a consultative and coordinated approach in the disbursement and expenditure of donor funds. In this way, local communities that are affected by desertification will be active participants in the solution-generation process. In-depth community education projects are envisioned as part of this new international aid program, and private donor financing is encouraged. Meanwhile, as new technologies are developed to deal with the problem of desertification, they need to be distributed for application across the world. Hence, the Convention calls for international cooperation in scientific research in this regard.

Desertification is a problem of sustainable development. It is directly connected to human challenges such as poverty, social and economic well-being and environmental protection as well. Broader environmental issues, such as climate change, biological diversity, and freshwater supplies, are indirectly related, so any effort to resolve this environmental challenge must entail coordinated research efforts and joint action.

Deforestation:

Deforestation is not a recent phenomenon. For centuries, human beings have cut down trees to clear space for land cultivation, or in order to use the wood for fuel. Over the last 200 years, and most especially after World War II, deforestation increased because the logging industry became a globally profitable endeavor, and so the clearing of forested areas was accelerated for the purposes of industrial development. In the long term, this intensified level of deforestation is considered problematic because the forest is unable to regenerate itself quickly. The deforestation that has occurred in tropical rainforests is seen as an especially serious concern, due to the perceived adverse effects of this process upon the entire global ecosystem.

The most immediate consequence of deforestation is soil degradation. Soil, which is necessary for the growth of vegetation, can be a fragile and vital property. Organically, an extensive evolution process must take place before soil can produce vegetation, yet at the same time, the effects of natural elements, such as wind and rain, can easily and quickly degrade this resource. This

phenomenon is known as soil erosion. In addition, natural elements like wind and rain reduce the amount of fertile soil on the ground, making soil scarcity a genuine problem. When fertile topsoil that already exists is removed from the landscape in the process of deforestation, soil scarcity is further exacerbated. Equally significant is the fact that once land has been cleared so that the topsoil can be cultivated for crop production, not only are the nutrient reserves in the soil depleted, thus producing crops of inferior quality, but the soil structure itself becomes stressed and deteriorates further.

Another direct result of deforestation is flooding. When forests are cleared, removing the cover of vegetation, and rainfall occurs, the flow of water increases across the surface of land. When extensive water runoff takes place, the frequency and intensity of flooding increases. Other adverse effects of deforestation include the loss of wildlife and biodiversity within the ecosystem that supports such life forms.

At a broader level, tropical rainforests play a vital role in maintaining the global environmental system. Specifically, destruction of tropical rainforests affects the carbon dioxide cycle. When forests are destroyed by burning (or rotting), carbon dioxide is released into the air, thus contributing to an intensified "greenhouse effect." The increase in greenhouse gas emissions like carbon dioxide is a major contributor to global warming, according to many environmental scientists. Indeed, trees themselves absorb carbon dioxide in the process of photosynthesis, so their loss also reduces the absorption of greenhouse gases.

Tropical rainforest destruction also adversely affects the nitrogen cycle. Nitrogen is a key nutrient for both plants and animals. Plants derive nitrogen from soil, while animals obtain it via nitrogen-enriched vegetation. This element is essential for the formation of amino acids, and thereby for proteins and biochemicals that all living things need for metabolism and growth. In the nitrogen cycle, vegetation acquires these essential proteins and biochemicals, and then cyclically returns them to the atmosphere and global ecosystem. Accordingly, when tropical rainforest ecosystems are compromised, not only is vegetation removed; the atmosphere is also affected and climates are altered. At a more immediate level, the biodiversity within tropical rainforests, including wildlife and insect species and a wealth of plant varieties, is depleted. Loss of rare plants is of particular concern because certain species as yet unknown and unused could likely yield many practical benefits, for instance as medicines.

As a result of the many challenges associated with deforestation, many environmental groups and agencies have argued for government policies on the sustainable development of forests by governments across the globe. While many countries have instituted national policies and programs aimed at reducing deforestation, and substantial research has been advanced in regard to sustainable and regenerative forestry development, there has been very little progress on an international level. Generally speaking, most tropical rainforests are located in developing and less developed countries, where economic growth is often dependent upon the exploitation of tropical

rainforests. Timber resources as well as wildlife hunting tend to be particularly lucrative arenas.

In places such as the Amazon, where deforestation takes place for the construction of energy plants aimed at industrialization and economic development, there is an exacerbated effect on the environment. After forests are cleared in order to construct such projects, massive flooding usually ensues. The remaining trees then rot and decay in the wake of the flooding. As the trees deteriorate, their biochemical makeup becomes more acidic, producing poisonous substances such as hydrogen sulphide and methane gases. Acidified water subsequently corrodes the mechanical equipment and operations of the plants, which are already clogged by rotting wood after the floodwaters rise.

Deforestation generally arises from an economically plausible short-term motivation, but nonetheless poses a serious global concern because the effects go beyond national boundaries. The United Nations has established the World Commission on Forest and Sustainable Development. This body's task is to determine the optimal means of dealing with the issue of deforestation, without unduly affecting normal economic development, while emphasizing the global significance of protecting tropical forest ecosystems.

5. Water Resources

For all terrestrial fauna, including humans, water is the most immediate necessity to sustain life. As the population has increased and altered an ever-greater portion of the landscape from its natural condition, demand on water resources has intensified, especially with the development of industrialization and large-scale irrigation. The supply of freshwater is inherently limited, and moreover distributed unevenly across the earth's landmasses. Moreover, not just demand for freshwater but activities certain to degrade it are becoming more pervasive. By contrast, the oceans form a sort of "last wilderness," still little explored and in large part not seriously affected by human activity. However, coastal environments - the biologically richest part of the marine ecosystem-are experiencing major depletion due to human encroachment and over-exploitation.

Freshwater:

In various regions, for instance the Colorado River in the western United States, current withdrawals of river water for irrigation, domestic, and industrial use consume the entire streamflow so that almost no water flows into the sea at the river's mouth. Yet development is ongoing in many such places, implying continually rising demand for water. In some areas reliant on groundwater, aquifers are being depleted at a markedly faster rate than they are being replenished. An example is the San Joaquin Valley in California, where decades of high water withdrawals for agriculture have caused land subsidence of ten meters or more in some spots.

Naturally, the uncertainty of future water supplies is particularly acute in arid and semi-arid regions. Speculation that the phenomenon of global warming will alter geographic and seasonal rainfall patterns adds further uncertainty.

Water conservation measures have great potential to alleviate supply shortages. Some city water systems are so old and beset with leaking pipes that they lose as much water as they meter. Broad-scale irrigation could be replaced by drip-type irrigation, actually enhancing the sustainability of agriculture. In many areas where heavy irrigation has been used for decades, the result is deposition of salts and other chemicals in the soil such that the land becomes unproductive for farming and must be abandoned.

Farming is a major source of water pollution. Whereas restrictions on industrial effluents and other "point sources" are relatively easy to implement, comparable measures to reform hydraulic practices at farms and other "nonpoint sources" pose a significantly knottier challenge. Farm-caused water pollution takes the following main forms:

- Nitrate pollution found in wells in intensive farming areas as a consequence of heavy fertilizer use is a threat to human health. The most serious danger is to infants, who by ingesting high-nitrate water can contract methemoglobinemia, sometimes called "blue baby syndrome," a potentially fatal condition.

- Fertilizer runoff into rivers and lakes imparts unwanted nutrients that cause algae growth and eventual loss of oxygen in the body of water, degrading its ability to support fish and other desirable aquatic life.

- Toxic agricultural chemicals - insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides - are detectable in some aquifers and waterways.

In general, it is much easier to get a pollutant into water than to retrieve it out. Gasoline additives, dry cleaning chemicals, other industrial toxins, and in a few areas radionucleides have all been found in water sources intended for human use. The complexity and long time scale of subterranean hydrological movements essentially assures that pollutants already deposited in aquifers will continue to turn up for decades to come. Sophisticated water treatment processes are available, albeit expensive, to reclaim degraded water and render it fit for human consumption. Yet source protection is unquestionably a more desirable alternative.

In much of the developing world, and even some low-income rural enclaves of the developed world, the population lacks ready access to safe water. Surface water and shallow groundwater supplies are susceptible to contamination from untreated wastewater and failing septic tanks, as well as chemical hazards. The occurrence of waterborne disease is almost certainly greatly underreported.

Marine Resources:

Coastal areas have always been desirable places for human habitation, and population pressure on them continues to increase. Many types of water degradation that affect lakes and rivers also affect coastal zones: industrial effluents, untreated or partially treated sewage, nutrient load from agriculture figure prominently in both cases. Prospects for more extreme storms as a result of global warming, as well as the pervasiveness of poorly planned development in many coastal areas, forebode that catastrophic hurricanes and landslides may increase in frequency in the future. Ongoing rise in sea levels will force remedial measures and in some cases abandonment of currently valuable coastal property.

Fisheries over much of the globe have been overharvested, and immediate conservation measures are required to preserve stocks of many species. Many governments subsidized factory-scale fishing fleets in the 1970s and 1980s, and the resultant catch increase evidently surpassed a sustainable level. It is uncertain how much of the current decline in fish stocks stems from overharvesting and how much from environmental pollution. The deep ocean remains relatively unaffected by human activity, but continental shelves near coastlines are frequently seriously polluted, and these close-to-shore areas are the major biological nurseries for food fish and the smaller organisms they feed on.

6. Environmental Toxins

Toxic chemical pollution exploded on the public consciousness with disclosure of spectacularly polluted industrial areas such as Love Canal near Buffalo, New York. There is no question that pollutants such as organophosphates or radionucleides can be highly deleterious to health, but evidence to date suggests that seriously affected areas are a localized rather than universal problem.

While some explore the possibilities for a lifestyle that fully eschews use of modern industrial chemicals, the most prevalent remediative approach is to focus on more judicious use. The most efficient chemical plants are now able to contain nearly all toxic byproducts of their production processes within the premises, minimizing the release of such substances into the environment. Techniques such as Integrated Pest Management (IPM) dictate limited rather than broadcast use of pesticides: application only when needed using the safest available chemical, supplemented as much as possible with nontoxic controls.

While heightened public awareness and growing technical sophistication suggest a hopeful outlook on limiting the damage from manmade environmental toxins, one must grant that previous incidents of their misuse and mishandling have already caused environmental damage that will have to be

dealt with for many years to come. In the case of the most hazardous radioactive substances, the time scale for successful remediation actually extends beyond that of the recorded history of civilization. Moreover, in this era of high population density and rapid economic growth, quotidian activities such as the transport of chemicals will occasionally, seemingly inevitably result in accidents with adverse environmental consequences.

7. "Islandization" and Biodiversity

With increased awareness regarding the adverse effects of unregulated hunting and habitat depletion upon wildlife species and other aspects of biodiversity, large-scale efforts across the globe have been initiated to reduce and even reverse this trend.

In every region of the world, many species of wildlife and areas of biodiversity have been saved from extinction. Nationally, many countries have adopted policies aimed at preservation and conservation of species, and one of the most tangible measures has been the proliferation of protected habitats. Such habitats exist in the form of wildlife reserves, marine life reserves, and other such areas where biodiversity can be protected from external encroachment and exploitation.

Despite these advances in wildlife and biodiversity protection, further and perhaps more intractable challenges linger. Designated reserves, while intended to prevent further species decline, exist as closed territories, fragmented from other such enclaves and disconnected from the larger ecosystem. This environmental scenario is referred to as "islandization." Habitat reserves often serve as oversized zoos or game farms, with landscapes and wildlife that have effectively been "tamed" to suit. Meanwhile, the larger surrounding ecosystem continues to be seriously degraded and transformed, while within the islandized habitat, species that are the focus of conservation efforts may not have sufficient range and may not be able to maintain healthy genetic variability.

As a consequence, many conservationists and preservationists have demanded that substantially larger portions of land be withheld as habitat reserves, and a network of biological corridors to connect continental reserves be established. While such efforts to combat islandization have considerable support in the United States, how precisely such a program would be instituted, especially across national boundaries, remains a matter of debate. International conservationists and preservationists say without a network of reserves a massive loss of biodiversity will result.

The concept of islandization illustrates why conservation and preservation of wildlife and biodiversity must consider and adopt new, broader strategies. In the past, conservation and preservation efforts have been aimed at specific species, such as the spotted owl and grizzly bear in North America, the Bengal tiger in Southeast Asia, the panda in China, elephants in Africa. Instead, the new approach is to simultaneously protect many and varied species that inhabit the same ecosystem. This method, referred to as "bio-regional conservation," may more efficaciously

generate longer-term and more far-reaching results precisely because it is aimed at preserving entire ecosystems, and all the living things within.

More About Biodiversity Issues:

This section is directly taken from the United Nations Environmental Program: "Biodiversity Assessment"

The Global Biodiversity Assessment, completed by 1500 scientists under the auspices of United Nations Environmental Program in 1995, updated what is known (or unknown) about global biological diversity at the ecosystem, species and genetic levels. The assessment was uncertain of the total number of species on Earth within an order of magnitude. Of its working figure of 13 million species, only 13 percent are scientifically described. Ecological community diversity is also poorly known, as is its relationship to biological diversity, and genetic diversity has been studied for only a small number of species. The effects of human activities on biodiversity have increased so greatly that the rate of species extinctions is rising to hundreds or thousands of times the background level. These losses are driven by increasing demands on species and their habitats, and by the failure of current market systems to value biodiversity adequately. The Assessment calls for urgent action to reverse these trends.

There has been a new recognition of the importance of protecting marine and aquatic biodiversity. The first quantitative estimates of species losses due to growing coral reef destruction predict that almost 200,000 species, or one in five presently contributing to coral reef biodiversity, could die out in the next 40 years if human pressures on reefs continue to increase.

Since Rio, many countries have improved their understanding of the status and importance of their biodiversity, particularly through biodiversity country studies such as those prepared under the auspices of UNEP/GEF. The United Kingdom identified 1250 species needing monitoring, of which 400 require action plans to ensure their survival. Protective measures for biodiversity, such as legislation to protect species, can prove effective. In the USA, almost 40 percent of the plants and animals protected under the Endangered Species Act are now stable or improving as a direct result of recovery efforts. Some African countries have joined efforts to protect threatened species through the 1994 Lusaka Agreement, and more highly migratory species are being protected by specialized cooperative agreements among range states under the Bonn Agreement.

There is an emerging realization that a major part of conservation of biological diversity must take place outside of protected areas and involve local communities. The extensive agricultural areas occupied by small farmers contain much biodiversity that is important for sustainable food production. Indigenous agricultural practices have been and continue to be important elements in the maintenance of biodiversity, but these are being displaced and lost. There is a new focus on the

interrelationship between agrodiversity conservation and sustainable use and development practices in smallholder agriculture, with emphasis on use of farmers' knowledge and skills as a source of information for sustainable farming.

Perhaps even more important than the loss of biodiversity is the transformation of global biogeochemical cycles, the reduction in the total world biomass, and the decrease in the biological productivity of the planet. While quantitative measurements are not available, the eventual economic and social consequences may be so significant that the issue requires further attention.

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Online resources used generally in the Environmental Overview:

Environmental Protection Agency Global Warming Site. URL: http://www.epa.gov/globalwarming

Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations: Forestry. URL: http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/sofo/en/

Global Warming Information Page. URL: http://globalwarming.org

United Nations Environmental Program. URL: http://www.unep.org/GEO/GEO_Products/Assessment_Reports/

United Nations Global Environmental Outlook. URL: http://www.unep.org/geo/geo4/media/

Note on Edition Dates:

The edition dates for textual resources are noted above because they were used to formulate the original content. We also have used online resources (cited above) to update coverage as needed.

Information Resources

For more information about environmental concepts, CountryWatch recommends the following resources:

The United Nations Environmental Program Network (with country profiles)

<http://www.unep.net/>

The United Nations Environment Program on Climate Change

<http://climatechange.unep.net/>

The United Nations Environmental Program on Waters and Oceans

<http://www.unep.ch/earthw/Pdepwat.htm>

The United Nations Environmental Program on Forestry: "Forests in Flux"

<http://www.unep-wcmc.org/forest/flux/homepage.htm>

FAO "State of the World's Forests"

<http://www.fao.org/forestry/FO/SOFO/SOFO99/sofo99-e.stm>

World Resources Institute.

<http://www.wri.org/>

Harvard University Center for Health and the Global Environment

<http://www.med.harvard.edu/chge/the-review.html>

The University of Wisconsin Center for Sustainability and the Global Environment

http://sage.aos.wisc.edu/

International Environmental Agreements and Associations

International Policy Development in Regard to Global Warming:

Introduction

Regardless of what the precise nature of the relationship between greenhouse gas emissions and

global warming may be, it seems that there is some degree of a connection between the phenomena. Any substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and global warming trends will likely involve systematic changes in industrial operations, the use of advanced energy sources and technologies, as well as global cooperation in implementing and regulating these transformations.

In this regard, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) stipulated the following objectives:

1. To stabilize "greenhouse gas" concentrations within the atmosphere, in such a manner that would preclude hazardous anthropogenic intervention into the existing biosphere and ecosystems of the world. This stabilization process would facilitate the natural adaptation of ecosystems to changes in climate.

2. To ensure and enable sustainable development and food production on a global scale.

Following are two discusssions regarding international policies on the environment, followed by listings of international accords.

Special Entry: The Kyoto Protocol

The UNFCCC was adopted at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, and entered into force in 1994. Over 175 parties were official participants.

Meanwhile, however, many of the larger, more industrialized nations failed to reach the emissions' reduction targets, and many UNFCCC members agreed that the voluntary approach to reducing emissions had not been successful. As such, UNFCCC members reached a consensus that legally binding limits were necessitated, and agreed to discuss such a legal paradigm at a meeting in Kyoto, Japan in 1997. At that meeting, the UNFCCC forged the Kyoto Protocol. This concord is the first legally binding international agreement that places limits on emissions from industrialized countries. The major greenhouse gas emissions addressed in the Kyoto Protocol include carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, sulfur hexafluoride, and methane.

The provisions of the Kyoto Protocol stipulate that economically advanced nations must reduce their combined emissions of greenhouse gases, by approximately five percent from their 1990 levels, before the 2008-2010 deadline. Countries with the highest carbon dioxide emissions, such as the United States (U.S.), many of the European Union (EU) countries, and Japan, are to reduce emissions by a scale of 6 to 8 percent. All economically advanced nations must show "demonstrable progress" by 2005. In contrast, no binding limits or timetable have been set on developing countries. Presumably, this distinction is due to the fact that most developing countries -- with the obvious exceptions of India and China -- simply do not emit as many greenhouse gases

as do more industrially advanced countries. Meanwhile, these countries are entrenched in the process of economic development.

Regardless of the aforementioned reasoning, there has been strong opposition against the asymmetrical treatment assigned to emissions limits among developed and developing countries. Although this distinction might be regarded as unfair in principle, associations such as the Alliance of Small Island States have been vocal in expressing how global warming -- a result of greenhouse gas emissions - has contributed to the rise in sea level, and thus deleteriously affected their very existence as island nation states. For this reason, some parties have suggested that economically advanced nations, upon returning to their 1990 levels, should be required to further reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by a deadline of 2005. In response, interested parties have observed that even if such reductions were undertaken by economically advanced nations, they would not be enough to completely control global warming. Indeed, a reduction in the rate of fossil fuel usage by developing nations would also be necessary to have substantial ameliorative effect on global warming. Indeed, a reduction in the rate of fossil fuel usage by developing nations would also be necessary to have substantial ameliorative effect on global warming.

As such, the Protocol established a "Clean Development Mechanism" which permits developed countries to invest in projects aimed at reducing emissions within developing countries in return for credit for the reductions. Ostensibly, the objective of this mechanism is to curtail emissions in developing countries without unduly penalizing them for their economic development. Under this model, the countries with more potential emissions credits could sell them to other signatories of the Kyoto Protocol, whose emissions are forecast to significantly rise in the next few years. Should this trading of emissions credits take place, it is estimated that the Kyoto Protocol's emissions targets could still be met.

In 1999, the International Energy Outlook projected that Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and Newly Independent States, as well as parts of Asia, are all expected to show a marked decrease in their level of energy-related carbon emissions in 2010. Nations with the highest emissions, specifically, the U.S., the EU and Japan, are anticipated to reduce their emissions by up to 8 percent by 2012. By 2000, however, the emissions targets were not on schedule for achievement. Indeed, the U.S. Department of Energy estimates forecast that by 2010, there will be a 34 percent increase in carbon emissions from the 1990 levels, in the absence of major shifts in policy, economic growth, energy prices, and consumer trends. Despite this assessment in the U.S., international support for the Kyoto Protocol remained strong, especially among European countries and island states, who view the pact as one step in the direction away from reliance on fossil fuels and other sources of greenhouse gases.

In 2001, U.S. President, George W. Bush, rejected his country's participation in the Kyoto Protocol, saying that the costs imposed on the global economic system, and especially, on the US, overshadowed the benefits of the Protocol. He also cited the unfair burden on developed nations to

reduce emissions, as another primary reasons for withdrawal from the international pact, as well as insufficient evidence regarding the science of global warming. Faced with impassioned international disapproval for his position, the U.S. president stated that his administration remained interested in dealing with the matter of global warming, but would endorse alternative measures to combat the problem, such as voluntary initiatives limiting emissions. Critics of Bush's position, however, have noted that it was the failure of voluntary initiatives to reduce emissions following the Rio Summit that led to the establishment of the Kyoto Protocol in the first place.

In the wake of the Bush administration's decision, many participant countries resigned themselves to the reality that the goals of the Kyoto Protocol might not be achieved without U.S. involvement. Nevertheless, in Bonn, Germany, in July 2001, the remaining participant countries struck a political compromise on some of the key issues and sticking points, and planned to move forward with the Protocol, irrespective of the absence of the U.S. The key compromise points included the provision for countries to offset their targets with carbon sinks (these are areas of forest and farmland which can absorb carbon through the process of photosynthesis). Another compromise point within the broader Bonn Agreement was the reduction of emissions cuts of six gases from over 5 percent to a more achievable 2 percent. A third key change was the provision of funding for less wealthy countries to adopt more progressive technologies.

In late October and early November 2001, the UNFCC's 7th Conference of the Parties met in Marrakesh, Morocco, to finalize the measures needed to make the Kyoto Protocol operational. Although the UNFCC projected that ratification of the Protocol would make it legally binding within a year, many critics noted that the process had fallen short of implementing significant changes in policy that would be necessary to actually stop or even slow climate change. They also maintained that the absence of U.S. participation effectively rendered the Protocol into being a political exercise without any substance, either in terms of transnational policy or in terms of environmental concerns.

The adoption of the compromises ensconced within the Bonn Agreement had been intended to make the provisions of the Kyoto Protocol more palatable to the U.S. In this regard, it failed to achieve its objective as the Bush administration continued to eschew participation in the international accord. Still, however, the Bonn Agreement did manage to render a number of other positive outcomes. Specifically, in 2002, key countries, such as Russia, Japan and Canada agreed to ratify the protocol, bringing the number of signatories to 178. The decision by key countries to ratify the protocol was regarded as "the kiss of life" by observers.

By 2005, on the eve of a climate change conference in London, British Prime Minister Tony Blair was hoping to deal with the problems of climate change beyond the provisions set forth in the Kyoto Protocol. Acknowledging that the Kyoto Protocol could not work in its current form, Blair wanted to open the discussion for a new climate change plan.

Blair said that although most of the world had signed on to Kyoto, the protocol could not meet any of its practical goals of cutting greenhouse gas emissions without the participation of the United States, the world's largest polluter. He also noted that any new agreement would have to include India and China -- significant producers of greenhouse gas emissions, but exempt from Kyoto because they have been classified as developing countries. Still, he said that progress on dealing with climate change had been stymied by "a reluctance to face up to reality and the practical action needed to tackle problem."

Blair also touted the "huge opportunities" in technology and pointed toward the possibilities offered by wind, solar and nuclear power, along with fuel cell technology, eco-friendly biofuels, and carbon capture and storage which could generate low carbon power. Blair also asserted that his government was committed to achieving its domestic goal of reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 20 percent by 2010.

In the United States, President George W. Bush has said that global warming remained a debatable issue and despite conclusions reached by his own Environmental Protection Agency, he has not agreed with the conclusion that global warming and climate change are linked with human activities. Bush has also refused to ratify Kyoto on the basis of its economic costs.

Australia, an ally of the United States, has taken a similarly dim view of the Kyoto Protocol. Ahead of the November 2005 climate change meeting in Canada in which new goals for the protocol were to be discussed, Australia 's Environment Minister, Ian Campbell, said that negotiating new greenhouse gas emission levels for the Kyoto Protocol would be a waste of time. Campbell said, "There is a consensus that the caps, targets and timetables approach is flawed. If we spend the next five years arguing about that, we'll be fiddling and negotiating while Rome burns." Campbell, like the Bush administration, has also advocated a system of voluntary action in which industry takes up new technologies rather than as a result of compelling the reduction of emissions. But the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) has called on its government to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, to establish a system of emissions trading, and to set binding limits on emissions. Interestingly, although it did not sign on to Kyoto , Australia was expected to meet its emissions target by 2012 (an 8 percent increase in 1990 levels in keeping with the country's reliance on coal). But this success has nothing to do with new technologies and is due to state-based regulations on land clearing.

Note: The Kyoto Protocol calls for developed nations to cut greenhouse emissions by 5.2 percent of 1990 levels by 2012.

Special Entry: Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen (2009) --

In December 2009, the United Nations Climate Change Summit opened in the Danish capital of

Copenhagen. The summit was scheduled to last from Dec. 7-18, 2009. Delegates from more than 190 countries were in attendance, and approximately 100 world leaders, including British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and United States President Barack Obama, were expected to participate. At issue was the matter of new reductions targets on greenhouse gas emissions by 2020.

Despite earlier fears that little concurrence would come from the conference, effectively pushing significant actions forward to a 2010 conference in Mexico City, negotiators were now reporting that the talks were productive and several key countries, such as South Africa, had pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The two main issues that could still lead to cleavages were questions of agreement between the industrialized countries and the developing countries of the world, as well as the overall effectiveness of proposals in seriously addressing the perils of climate change.

On Dec. 9, 2009, four countries -- the United Kingdom, Australia, Mexico and Norway -- presented a document outlining ideas for raising and managing billions of dollars, which would be intended to help vulnerable countries dealing with the perils of climate change. Described as a "green fund," the concept could potentially help small island states at risk because of the rise in sea level. Bangladesh identified itself as a potential recipient of an assistance fund, noting that as a country plagued by devastating floods, it was particularly hard-hit by climate change. The "green fund" would fall under the rubric of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, for which developed countries have been committed to quantifying their emission reduction targets, and also to providing financial and technical support to developing countries.

The United Kingdom, Australia, Mexico and Norway also called for the creation of a new legal treaty that would replace the Kyoto Protocol. This new treaty, which could go into force in 2012, would focus largely on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. But Australia went even further in saying that the successor treaty to the Kyoto Protocol, should be one with provisions covering all countries. Such a move would be a departure from the structure of the Kyoto Protocol, which contained emissions targets for industrialized countries due to the prevailing view that developed countries had a particular historic responsibility to be accountable for climate change. More recently, it has become apparent that substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions demanded by scientists would only come to pass with the participation also of significant developing nation states, such as China and India. Indeed, one of the most pressing critiques of the Kyoto Protocol was that it was a "paper tiger" that failed to address the impact of the actions of emerging economies like China and India, with its focus on the developed economies.

Now, in 2009, China -- as the world's biggest greenhouse gas emitter -- was responding this dubious distinction by vocalizing its criticism of the current scenario and foregrounding its new commitments. Ahead of the Copenhagen summit, China had announced it would reduce the intensity of its carbon emissions per unit of its GDP in 2020 by 40 to 45 percent against 2005 levels. With that new commitment at hand, China was now accusing the United States and the

European Union of shirking their own responsibilities by setting weak targets for greenhouse gas emissions cuts. Senior Chinese negotiator, Su Wei, characterized the goals of the world's second largest greenhouse gas emitter -- the United States -- as "not notable," and the European Union's target as "not enough." Su Wei also took issue with Japan for setting implausible preconditions.

On Dec. 11, 2009, China demanded that developed and wealthy countries in Copenhagen should help deliver a real agreement on climate change by delivering on their promises to reduce carbon emissions and provide financial support for developing countries to adapt to global warming. In so doing, China's Vice Foreign Minister He Yafei said his country was hoping that a "balanced outcome" would emerge from the discussions at the summit. Echoing the position of the Australian government, He Yafei spoke of a draft agreement as follows: "The final document we're going to adopt needs to be taking into account the needs and aspirations of all countries, particularly the most vulnerable ones."

China's Vice Foreign Minister emphasized the fact that climate change was "a matter of survival" for developing countries, and accordingly, such countries need wealthier and more developed countries to accentuate not only their pledges of emissions reduction targets, but also their financial commitments under the aforementioned United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. To that end, scientists and leaders of small island states in the Indian Ocean, the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, have highlighted the existential threat posed by global warming and the concomitant rise in sea level.

China aside, attention was also on India -- another major player in the developing world and a country with an industrializing economy that was impacting the environment. At issue was the Indian government's decision to set a carbon intensity target, which would slow emissions growth by up to 25 percent by the 2020 deadline. This strong position was resisted by some elements in India, who argued that their country should not be taking such a strong position when developed wealthy countries were yet to show accountability for their previous commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The matter grew so heated that the members of the opposition stormed out of the parliament in protest as Indian Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh defended the policy. But the political pressure at home in India was leaving the Indian delegation in Copenhagen in a state of chaos as well. In fact, India's top environmental negotiator refused to travel to Copenhagen in protest of the government's newly-announced stance.

China and India were joined by Brazil and South Africa in the crafting of a draft document calling for a new global climate treaty to be completed by June 2010. Of concern has been the realization that there was insufficient time to find concurrence on a full legal treaty, which would leave countries only with a politically-binding text by the time the summit at Copenhagen closed. But Guyana's leader, President Bharrat Jagdeo, warned that the summit in Denmark would be classified as a failure unless a binding document was agreed upon instead of just political consensus. He urged his cohorts to act with purpose saying, "Never before have science, economics, geo-strategic self-interest and politics intersected in such a way on an issue that impacts

everyone on the planet."

Likewise, Tuvalu demanded that legally binding agreements emerge from Copenhagen. Its proposal was supported by many of the vulnerable countries, from small island states and sub-Saharan Africa, all of whom warned of the catastrophic impact of climate change on their citizens. Tuvalu also called for more aggressive action, such as an amendment to the 1992 agreement, which would focus on sharp greenhouse gas emissions and the accepted rise in temperatures, due to the impact the rise in seas. The delegation from Kiribati joined the call by drawing attention to the fact that one village had to be abandoned due to waist-high water, and more such effects were likely to follow. Kiribati's Foreign Secretary, Tessie Lambourne, warned that the people of Kiribati could well be faced with no homeland in the future saying, "Nobody in this room would want to leave their homeland." But despite such impassioned pleas and irrespective of warnings from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that the rise in sea level from melting polar ice caps would deleteriously affect low-lying atolls such as such as Tuvalu and Kiribati in the Pacific, and the Maldives in the Indian Ocean, the oil-giant Saudi Arabia was able to block this move.

Meanwhile, within the developed countries, yet another power struggle was brewing. The European Union warned it would only agree to raise its target of 20 percent greenhouse gas emissions reductions to 30 percent if the United States demonstrated that it would do more to reduce its own emissions. It was unknown if such pressure would yield results. United States President Barack Obama offered a "provisional" 2020 target of 17 percent reductions, noting that he could not offer greater concessions at Copenhagen due to resistance within the United States Congress, which was already trying to pass a highly controversial "cap and trade" emissions legislation. However, should that emissions trading bill fail in the Senate, the United States Environment Protection Agency's declaration that greenhouse gases pose a danger to human health and the environment was expected to facilitate further regulations and limits on power plants and factories at the national level. These moves could potentially strengthen the Obama administration's offering at Copenhagen. As well, President Obama also signaled that he would be willing to consider the inclusion of international forestry credits.

Such moves indicated willingness by the Obama administration to play a more constructive role on the international environmental scene than its predecessor, the Bush administration. Indeed, ahead of his arrival at the Copenhagen summit, President Barack Obama's top environmental advisors promised to work on a substantial climate change agreement. To that end, United States Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson said at a press conference, "We are seeking robust engagement with all of our partners around the world." But would this pro-engagement assertion yield actual results?

By Dec. 12, 2009, details related to a draft document prepared by Michael Zammit Cutajar, the head of the Ad-hoc Working Group on Long-Term Cooperative Action, were released at the

Copenhagen climate conference. Included in the document were calls for countries to make major reductions in carbon emissions over the course of the next decade. According to the Washington Post, industrialized countries were called on to make cuts of between 25 percent and 40 percent below 1990 levels -- reductions that were far more draconian than the United States was likely to accept. As discussed above, President Obama had offered a provisional reduction target of 17 percent. The wide gap between the released draft and the United States' actual stated position suggested there was much more negotiating in the offing if a binding agreement could be forged, despite the Obama administration's claims that it was seeking greater engagement on this issue.

In other developments, the aforementioned call for financial support of developing countries to deal with the perils of climate change was partly answered by the European Union on Dec. 11, 2009. The European bloc pledged an amount of 2.4 billion euros (US$3.5 billion) annually from 2010 to 2012. Environment Minister Andreas Carlgren of Sweden -- the country that holds the rotating presidency of the European Union at the time of the summit -- put his weight behind the notion of a "legally binding deal." Meanwhile, Yvo de Boer, a top United Nations climate change official, focused less on the essence of the agreement and more on tangible action and effects saying, "Copenhagen will only be a success if it delivers significant and immediate action that begins the day the conference ends."

The division between developed and developing countries in Copenhagen reached new heights on Dec. 14, 2009, when some of the poor and less developed countries launched a boycott at the summit. The move, which was spurred by African countries but backed by China and India, appeared to be geared toward redirecting attention and primary responsibility to the wealthier and more industrialized countries. The impasse was resolved after the wealthier and more industrialized countries offered assurances that they did not intend on shirking from their commitments to reducing greenhouse gases. As a result, the participating countries ceased the boycott.

Outside the actual summit, thousands of protestors had gathered to demand crucial global warming, leading to clashes between police and demonstrators elsewhere in the Danish capital city. There were reports of scattered violence across Copenhagen and more than 1,000 people were arrested.

Nevertheless, by the second week of the climate change summit, hopes of forging a strong deal were eroding as developed and developing nations remained deadlocked on sharing cuts in greenhouse gases, and particularly on the matters of financing and temperature goals. In a bid to shore up support for a new climate change, United States President Barack Obama joined other world leaders in Copenhagen. On Dec. 14, 2009, there was a standoff brewing between the United States and China. At issue was China's refusal to accept international monitoring of its expressed targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The United States argued that China's opposition to verification could be a deal-breaker.

By the close of the summit, the difficult process eventually resulted in some consensus being cultivated. A draft text called for $100 billion a year by 2020 to assist poor nations cope with climate change, while aiming to limit global warming to two degrees Celsius compared with pre-industrial levels. The deal also included specific targets for developed countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and called for reductions by developing countries as a share of their economies. Also included in the agreement was a mechanism to verify compliance. The details of the agreement were supported by President Barack Obama, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

This draft would stand as an interim agreement, with a legally-binding international pact unlikely to materialize until 2010. In this way, the summit in Copenhagen failed to achieve its central objective, which was to negotiate a successor to the Kyoto Protocol on greenhouse gas emissions.

Editor's Note

In the background of these developments was the growing global consciousness related to global warming and climate change. Indeed, as the Copenhagen summit was ongoing, it was clear there was enormous concurrence on the significance of the stakes with an editorial on the matter of climate change being published in 56 newspapers in 45 countries. That editorial warned that without global action, climate change would "ravage our planet." Meanwhile, a global survey taken by Globescan showed that concern over global warming had exponentially increased from 1998 -- when only 20 percent of respondents believed it to be a serious problem -- to 64 percent in 2009. Such survey data, however, was generated ahead of the accusations by climate change skeptics that some climate scientists may have overstated the case for global warming, based on emails derived in an illicit manner from a British University.

Special Entry: Climate change talks in Doha in Qatar extend life of Kyoto Protocol (2012)

December 2012 saw climate talks ensue in the Qatari city of Doha as representatives from countries across the world gathered to discuss the fate of the Kyoto Protocol, which seeks to minimize greenhouse gas emissions. The summit yielded results with decisions made (1) to extend the Kyoto Protocol until 2020, and (2) for wealthier countries to compensate poorer countries for the losses and damage incurred as a result of climate change.

In regards to the second matter, Malia Talakai of Nauru, a leading negotiator for the Alliance of Small Island States, explained the necessity of the compensation package as follows: "We are trying to say that if you pollute you must help us."

This measure was being dubbed the "Loss and Damage" mechanism, and was being linked with United States President Barack Obama's request for $60 billion from Congress to deal with the

devastation caused by Hurricane Sandy months before. The sight of a hurricane bearing down on the northern Atlantic seaboard, along with the reality of the scope of reconstruction, appeared to have illustrated the economic costs of climate change -- not so much as a distant environmental issue -- but as a danger to the quotidian lives of people. Still, there was blame to be placed on the United States and European countries -- some of world's largest emitters -- for failing to do more to reduce emissions.

To that latter end, there was in fact little progress made on the central issue of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Had those emissions been reduced, there would have been less of a need to financially deal with the devastation caused by climate change. One interpretation was that the global community was accepting the fact that industrialization was contributing to global warming, which had deleterious effects on the polar ice caps and concomitantly on the rise of sea level, with devastating effects for small island nations. Thus, wealthier countries were willing to pay around $10 billion a year through 2020, effectively in "damages," to the poor countries that could be viewed as the "collateral damage" of industrial progress. But damages today could potentially be destruction tomorrow, leaving in place the existential challenges and burdens to be born by some of the world's smallest and least wealthy island countries.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the representative for the small island nation states at the Doha summit responded with ire, characterizing the lack of progress on reducing emissions as follows: "We see the package before us as deeply deficient in mitigation (carbon cuts) and finance. It's likely to lock us on the trajectory to a 3,4,5C rise in global temperatures, even though we agreed to keep the global average temperature rise of 1.5C to ensure survival of all islands. There is no new finance (for adapting to climate change and getting clean energy) -- only promises that something might materialize in the future. Those who are obstructive need to talk not about how their people will live, but whether our people will live."

Indeed, in most small island countries not just in the Pacific, but also the Caribbean and Indian Ocean, ecological concerns and the climate crisis have been dominant themes with dire life and death consequences looming in the background for their people. Small island nations in these region are already at risk from the rise of sea-level, tropical cyclones, floods. But their very livelihoods of fishing and subsistence farming were also at risk as a result of ecological and environmental changes. Increasingly high storm surges can wipe out entire villages and contaminate water supplies. Accordingly, the very existence of island nations, such as Kiribati and Tuvalu, are at severe risk of being obliterated from the map. Yet even with the existential threat of being wiped off the map in the offing, the international community has been either slow or restrictive in its efforts to deal with global warming, climate change, economic and ecological damage, as well as the emerging global challenge of environmental refugees.

A 2012 report from the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the Pacific Regional Environment Program underlined the concerns of small island nations and their people as it

concluded that the livelihoods of approximately 10 million people in Pacific island communities were increasingly vulnerable to climate change. In fact, low-lying islands in that region would likely confront losses of up to 18 percent of gross domestic product due to climate change, according to the report. The report covers 21 countries and territories, including Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa and Tonga, and recommended environmental legislation intended to deal with the climate crisis facing the small island countries particularly. As noted by David Sheppard, the director general of the Pacific Regional Environment Program that co-sponsored this study: "The findings... emphasize the need more than ever to raise the bar through collective actions that address the region's environmental needs at all levels."

Regardless of the failures of the summit in Qatar (discussed above), the meeting did facilitate a process starting in 2015, which would bind both wealthy and poor countries together in the mission of forging a new binding treaty that would replace the Kyoto Protocol and tackle the central causes of climate change.

For more information on the threats faced in small island nations by climate change and the measures being undertaken to lobby for international action, please see the Alliance for Small Island States available online at the URL: http://aosis.org/

Special Report

COP 21 summit in Paris ends with historic agreement to tackle climate change; rare international consensus formed on environmental crisis facing the planet (2015) --

In mid-December 2015, the highly-anticipated United Nations climate conference of parties (COP) in Paris, France, ended with a historic agreement. In fact, it would very likely be understood as the most significant international agreement signed by all the recognized countries of the world since the Cold War. Accordingly, the Paris Agreement was being distinguished as the first multilateral pact that would compel all countries across the world to cut its carbon emissions -- one of the major causes of increasing greenhouse gas emissions, which contribute to global warming, and its deleterious effects ranging from the dangerous rise in sea level to catastrophic climate change.

The accord, which was dubbed to be the "Paris Agreement," was the work of rigorous diplomacy and fervent environmental advocacy, and it aimed to address the climate change crisis facing the planet. As many as 195 countries were represented in the negotiations that led to the landmark climate deal. Indeed, it was only after weeks of passionate debate that international concurrence was reached in addressing the environmental challenges confronting the world, with particular attention to moving beyond fossil fuels and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The success of the COP 21 summit in Paris and the emergence of the landmark Paris Agreement was, to some extent, attributed to the efforts of France's Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius who presided over the negotiations. The French foreign minister's experience and credentials as a seasoned diplomat and respected statesman paid dividends. He skillfully guided the delegates from almost 200 countries and interest groups along the negotiations process, with ostensibly productive results and a reasonably robust deal to show for it.

On Dec. 12, 2015, French Foreign Minister Fabius officially adopted the agreement, declaring: "I now invite the COP to adopt the decision entitled Paris Agreement outlined in the document. Looking out to the room I see that the reaction is positive, I see no objections. The Paris agreement is adopted." Once Foreign Minister Fabius' gavel was struck, symbolically inaugurating the Paris Agreement into force, the COP delegate rushed to their feet with loud and bouyant cheers as well as thunderous applause.

In general, the Paris Agreement was being hailed as a victory for enviromental activists and a triumph for international diplomats, while at the same time being understood as simply an initial -- and imperfect -- move in the direction of a sustainable future. China's chief negotiator, Xie Zhenhua, issued this message, saying that while the accord was not ideal, it should "not prevent us from marching historical steps forward."

United States President Barack Obama lauded the deal as both "ambitious" and "historic," and the work of strenuous multilateral negotiations as he declared, "Together, we've shown what's possible when the world stands as one." The United States leader acknowledged that the accord was not "perfect," but he reminded the critics that it was "the best chance to save the one planet we have. "

Former United States Vice President Al Gore, one of the world's most well known environmental advocates, issued a lengthy statement on the accompishments ensconced in the Paris Agreement. He highlighted the fact that the Paris Agreement was a first step towards a future with a reduced carbon footprint on Planet Earth as he said, "The components of this agreement -- including a strong review mechanism to enhance existing commitments and a long-term goal to eliminate global-warming pollution this century -- are essential to unlocking the necessary investments in our future. No agreement is perfect, and this one must be strengthened over time, but groups across every sector of society will now begin to reduce dangerous carbon pollution through the framework of this agreement."

The central provisions of the Paris Agreement included the following items:

- Greenhouse gas emissions should peak as quickly as possible, with a move towards balancing energy sources, and ultimately the decrease of greenhouse gases in the second half of this century
- Global temperature increase would be limited to 1.5 degrees Centigrade above pre-industrial levels and would be held "well below" the two degrees Centigrade threshold

- Progress on these goals would be reviewed every five years beginning in 2020 with new greenhouse gas reduction targets issued every five years
- $100 billion would be expended each year in climate finance for developing countries to move forward with green technologies, with further climate financing to be advanced in the years beyond

It should be noted that there both legally binding and voluntary elements contained within the Paris Agreement. Specifically, the submission of an emissions reduction target and the regular review of that goal would be legally mandatory for all countries. Stated differently, there would be a system in place by which experts would be able to track the carbon-cutting progress of each country. At the same time, the specific targets to be set by countries would be determined at the discretion of the countries, and would not be binding. While there was some criticism over this non-binding element, the fact of the matter was that the imposition of emissions targets was believed to be a major factor in the failure of climate change talks in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 2009.

In 2015, the talks faced challenges as several countries, such as China and India, objected to conditions that would stymie economic and development. In order to avoid that kind of landmine, a system Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) was developed and formed the basis of the accord. As such, the Paris Agreement would, in fact, facilitate economic growth and development, as well as technological progress, but with the goal of long-term ecological sustainability based on low carbon sources. In fact, the agreement heralded as "the beginning of the end of the fossil fuel era." As noted by Nick Mabey, the head of the climate diplomacy organization E3G, said, "Paris means governments will go further and faster to tackle climate change than ever before. The transition to a low carbon economy is now unstoppable, ensuring the end of the fossil fuel age."

A particular sticking point in the agreement was the $100 billion earmarked for climate financing for developing countries to transition from traditional fossil fuels to green energy technologies and a low carbon future. In 2014, a report by the International Energy Agency indicated that the cost of that transition would actually be around $44 trillion by the mid-century -- an amount that would render the $100 billion being promised to be a drop in the proverbial bucket. However, the general expectation was that the Republican-controlled Senate in the United States, which would have to ratify the deal in that country, was not interested in contributing significant funds for the cause of climate change.

A key strength of the Paris Agreement was the ubiquitous application of measures to all countries. Of note was the frequently utilized concept of "flexibility" with regard to the Paris Agreement. Specifically, the varying capacities of the various countries in meeting their obligations would be anticipated and accorded flexibility. This aspect presented something of a departure from the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which drew a sharp distinction between developed and developing countries, and mandated a different set of obligations for those categories of countries. Thus, under Kyoto,

China and India were not held to the same standards as the United States and European countries. In the Paris Agreement, there would be commitments from all countries across the globe.

Another notable strength of the Paris Agreement was the fact that the countries of the world were finally able to reach consensus on the vital necessity to limit global temperature increases to 1.5 degrees Centigrade. Ahead of the global consensus on the deal, and as controversy continued to surface over the targeted global temperature limits, the leaders of island countries were sounding the alarm about the melting of the Polar ice caps and the associated rise in seal level. Prime Minister Enele Sopoaga of Tuvalu issued this dismal reminder: "Tuvalu's future … is already bleak and any further temperature increase will spell the total demise of Tuvalu. No leader in this room carries such a level of worry and responsibility. Just imagine you are in my shoes, what would you do?" It was thus something of a victory for environmental advocates that the countries of the world could find cnsensus on the lower number -- 1.5 degrees rather than 2 degrees.

A significant weak point with regard to the Paris deal was a "loss and damage" provision, which anticipates that even with all the new undertakings intended to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and move to a low carbon future, there would nonetheless be unavoidable climate change consequences. Those consequences ranged from the loss of arable land for farmers as well as soil erosion and contamination of potable water by sea water, to the decimation of territory in coastal zones and on small islands, due to the rise in sea level, with entire small island countries being rendered entirely uninhabitable. The reality was that peoples' homes across the world would be destroyed along with their way of life.

With that latter catastrophic effect being a clear and present danger for small island countries, the Association of Small Island States (AOSIS) demanded that the developed world acknowledge its responsibility for this irreversible damage..   Despite the fact that greenhouse gas emissions and the ensuing plague of global warming was, indeed, the consequence of development in the West (the United States and Europe) and the large power house countries, such as Russia, China and India, there was no appetite by those countries to sign on to unlimited liability. Under the Paris Agreement, there was a call for research on insurance mechanisms that would address loss and damage issues, with recommendations to come in the future.

The call for research was being regarded as an evasion of sorts and constituted the weakest aspect of the Paris Agreement. Not surprisingly, a coalition of small island nations demanded a "Marshall Plan" for the Pacific. Borrowing the term "Marshall Plan" from the post-World War II reconstruction effort, the coalition of Pacific island nation, which included Kiribati, Tuvalu, Fiji, and the Marshall Islands, called for an initiative that would include investment in renewable energy and shoreline protection, cultural preservation, economic assistance for economies in transition, and a plan for migration and resettlement for these countries as they confront the catastrophic effects of the melting of the Polar ice caps and the concomitant rise in sea level. The precise

contours of the initiative remained unknown, unspecified, and a mere exercise in theory at the time of writing. Yet such an initiative would, at some point, have to be addressed, given the realities of climate change and the slow motion calamity unfolding each day for low-lying island nations across the world.

As noted by Vice President Greg Stone of Conservation International, who also functions as an adviser to the government of Kiribati, "Imagine living in a place where you know it's going to go away someday, but you don't know what day that wave's going to come over and wash your home away." He added, "It's a disaster we know is going to happen."   Meanwhile, the intervening years promised to be filled with hardship for small island nations, such as Kiribati. Stone explained, "For every inch of sea-level rise, these islands lose 10 feet of their freshwater table to saltwater intrusion," Stone explained. "So it's not just about the day the water finally goes over the island; it's also about the day that there's just not enough water left and everyone has to move off the island." Presaging the future for island nations that could face submersion, Stone said, "If you look ahead 50 years, a country like Kiribati could become the first aqueous nation. possibility of migration. That is, they own this big patch of ocean, and they administer it from elsewhere."

Foreign Minister Minister Tony Debrum of the Marshall Islands emerged as the champion advocating on behalf of small island nation states and a loose coalition of concerned countries from the Pacific to the Caribbean, but with support from the United States. He addressed the comprehensive concerns of small island nations regarding the weaknesses of the deal, while simultaneously making clear that the Paris Agreement signified hope for the countries most at risk. In a formal statement, Debrum declared: "We have made history today. Emissions targets are still way off track, but this agreement has the tools to ramp up ambition, and brings a spirit of hope that we can rise to this challenge. I can go back home to my people and say we now have a pathway to survival." Debrum highlighted the imperatives of Pacific island nations, saying, "Our High Ambition Coalition was the lightning rod we needed to lift our sights and expectations for a strong agreement here in Paris. We were joined by countries representing more than half the world. We said loud and clear that a bare-bones, minimalist agreement would not fly. We instead demanded an agreement to mark a turning point in history, and the beginning of our journey to the post-carbon era."

Debrum of the Marshall Islands espoused the quintessential synopsis of the accord and its effects for those most likely to be affected by climate change as he noted, "Climate change won't stop overnight, and my country is not out of the firing line just yet, but today we all feel a little safer."

Editor's Entry on Environmental Policy:

The low-lying Pacific island nations of the world, including Kiribati, Tuvalu, the Marshall Islands, Fiji, among others, are vulnerable to the threats posed by global warming and cimate change,

derived from carbon emissions, and resulting in the rise in sea level. Other island nations in the Caribbean, as well as poor countries with coastal zones, were also at particular risk of suffering the deleterious effects of climate change.

Political policy in these countries are often connected to ecological issues, which have over time morphed into an existential crisis of sorts. Indeed, ecological concerns and the climate crisis have also been dominant themes with life and death consequences for the people of island nations in the Pacific. Indeed, the very livelihoods of fishing and subsistence farming remain at risk as a result of ecological and environmental changes. Yet even so, these countries are threatened by increasingly high storm surges, which could wipe out entire villages and contaminate water supplies. Moreover, because these are low lying island nations, the sustained rise in sea level can potentially lead to the terrain of these countries being unihabitable at best, and submerged at worst. Stated in plain terms, these countries are at severe risk of being obliterated from the map and their plight illuminates the emerging global challenge of environmental refugees. In these manifold senses, climate change is the existential crisis of the contemporary era.

Since the time of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, there have been efforts aimed at extending the life of that agreement, with an eye on minimizing greenhouse gas emissions, and thus minimizing the effects of climate change. Those endeavors have largely ended in failure, as exemplified by the unsuccessful Copenhagen talks in 2009 and the fruitless Doha talks in 2012 respectively. The success of the COP 21 talks in France, with the adoption of the landmark Paris Agreement in 2015, was regarded as the first glimmer of hope. Not only did the Paris Agreement signify the triumph of international diplomacy and global consensus, but it also marked the start of the end of the fossil fuel era, with the path forward toward a low carbon future reliant on greener technologies. Most crucially, the Paris Agreement stood as the first significant response in recent times to the central challenge of climate change and its quotidian effects on the lives of real human beings across the world.

1. Major International Environmental Accords:

General Environmental Concerns

Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context, Espoo, 1991.

Accords Regarding Atmosphere

Annex 16, vol. II (Environmental Protection: Aircraft Engine Emissions) to the 1044 Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation, Montreal, 1981

Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (LRTAP), Geneva, 1079

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), New York, 1002

Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, Vienna, 1985 including the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Depleted the Ozone Layer, Montreal, 1987

Accords Regarding Hazardous Substances

Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movements and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa, Bamako, 1991

Convention on Civil Liability for Damage Caused during Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road, Rail and Inland Navigation Vessels (CRTD), Geneva, 1989

Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (Basel Convention), Basel, 1989

Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents, Helsinki, 1992

Convention to Ban the Importation into Forum Island Countries of Hazardous and Radioactive Wastes and to Control the Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within the South Pacific Region (Waigani Convention), Waigani, 1995

European Agreement Concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR), Geneva 1957

FAO International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides, Rome, 1985

2. Major International Marine Accords:

Global Conventions

Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter (London Convention 1972), London, 1972

International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, as modified by Protocol of 1978 relation thereto (MARPOL 73/78), London, 1973 and 1978

International Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage 1969 (1969 CLC), Brussels, 1969, 1976, and 1984

International Convention on the Establishment of an International Fund for Compensation for Oil Pollution Damage 1971 (1971 Fund Convention), Brussels, 1971

Convention on Liability and Compensation for Damage in Connection with the Carriage of Hazardous and Noxious Substances by Sea (HNS), London 1996

International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response, and Co-operation (OPRC), London, 1990

International Convention Relation to Intervention on the High Seas in Cases of Oil Pollution Casualties (Intervention Convention), Brussels, 1969

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Montego Bay, 1982

Regional Conventions

Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping from Ships and Aircraft (Oslo Convention), Oslo, 1972

Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution from Land-based Sources (Paris Convention), Paris, 1974

Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North East Atlantic (OSPAR Convention), Paris, 1992

Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area (1974 Helsinki Convention), Helsinki 1974

Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area (1992 Helsinki Convention), Helsinki 1992

Conventions within the UNEP Regional Seas Programme

Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution, Bucharest, 1992

Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider

Caribbean Region, Cartagena de Indias, 1983

Convention for the Protection, Management, and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Eastern African Region, Nairobi, 1985

Kuwait Regional Convention for Co-operation on the Protection of the Marine Environment from Pollution, Kuwait, 1978

Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment and Coastal Region of the Mediterranean Sea (Barcelona Convention), Barcelona, 1976

Regional Convention for the Conservation of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Environment, Jeddah, 1982

Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region, Noumea, 1986

Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and Coastal Area of the South-East Pacific, Lima, 1981

Convention for Co-operation in the Protection and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the West and Central African Region, Abidjan, 1981

3. Major Conventions Regarding Living Resources:

Marine Living Resources

Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), Canberra, 1980

International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), Rio de Janeiro, 1966

International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW), Washington, 1946

Nature Conservation and Terrestrial Living Resources

Antarctic Treaty, Washington, D.C., 1959

Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage

Convention), Paris, 1972

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Nairobi, 1992

Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), Bonn, 1979

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), Washington, D.C., 1973

Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention), Ramsar, 1971

Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD), Paris 1994

FAO International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources, Rome, 1983

International Tropical Timber Agreement, 1994 (ITTA, 1994), Geneva, 1994

Freshwater Resources

Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, Helsinki, 1992

4. Major Conventions Regarding Nuclear Safety:

Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency (Assistance Convention), Vienna, 1986

Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident (Notification Convention), Vienna, 1986

Convention on Nuclear Safety, Vienna, 1994

Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage, Vienna, 1963

5. Major Intergovernmental Organizations

Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)

European Union (EU): Environment

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

Global Environment Facility (GEF)

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

International Labour Organization (ILO)

International Maritime Organization (IMO)

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

International Oil Pollution Compensation Funds (IOPC Funds)

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Environment Policy Committee (EPOC)

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

World Bank

World Food Programme (WFP)

World Health Organization (WHO)

World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

World Trade Organization (WTO)

6. Major Non-Governmental Organizations

Atmosphere Action Network East Asia (AANEA)

Climate Action Network (CAN)

Consumers International (CI)

Earth Council

Earthwatch Institute

Environmental Liaison Centre International (ELCI)

European Environmental Bureau (EEB)

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)

Friends of the Earth International (FoEI)

Greenpeace International

International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)

International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)

International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)

International Solar Energy Society (ISES)

IUCN-The World Conservation Union

Pesticide Action Network (PAN)

Sierra Club

Society for International Development (SID)

Third World Network (TWN)

Water Environment Federation (WEF)

Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)

World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)

World Federalist Movement (WFM)

World Resources Institute (WRI)

World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF)

7. Other Networking Instruments

Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED)

Global Legislators for a Balanced Environment (GLOBE)

Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC)

United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS)

Appendices

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Methodology Note for Demographic Data:

The demographic numbers for cities and national populations listed in CountryWatch content are derived from the Geoba.se website, which analyzes data from the World Bank. The current demographic numbers displayed on the Countrywatch website are reflective of the latest available estimates.

The demographic information for language, ethnicity and religion listed in CountryWatch content is

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Note on Edition Dates:

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Methodology Notes for Economic Data:

Estimates by CountryWatch.com of GDP in dollars in most countries are made by converting local currency GDP data from the International Monetary Fund World Economic Outlook to US dollars by market exchange rates estimated from the International Monetary Fund International Financial Statistics and projected out by the CountryWatch Macroeconomic Forecast. Real GDP was estimated by deflating current dollar values by the US GDP Implicit Price Deflator.

Exceptions to this method were used for:
• Bosnia-Herzegovina
• Nauru
• Cuba
• Palau
• Holy See
• San Marino
• Korea, North
• Serbia & Montenegro
• Liberia
• Somalia
• Liechtenstein
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• Monaco
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Methodology Notes for the HDI:

Since 1990, the United Nations Development Programme, in concert with organizations across the globe, has produced the Human Development Index (or HDI). According to the UNDP, the index measures average achievement in basic human development in one simple composite index, and produces from this index a ranking of countries. The HDI is a composite of three basic components of human development: longevity, knowledge and standard of living. Longevity is measured by life expectancy. Knowledge is measured by combination of adult literacy and mean

years of schooling. Standard of living is measured by purchasing power, based on real GDP per capita (in constant US$) adjusted for differences in international living costs (or, purchasing power parity, PPP). While the index uses these social indicators to measure national performance with regard to human welfare and development, not all countries provide the same level of information for each component needed to compute the index; therefore, as in any composite indicator, the final index is predicated on projections, predictions and weighting schemes. The index is a static measure, and thus, an incomplete measure of human welfare. In fact, the UNDP says itself the concept of human development focuses on the ends rather than the means of development and progress, examining in this manner, the average condition of all people in a given country.

Specifically, the index is calculated by determining the maximum and minimum for each of the three components (as listed above) and then measuring where each country stands in relation to these scales-expressed as a value between 0 and 1. For example, the minimum adult literary rate is zero percent, the maximum is 100 percent, and the reading skills component of knowledge in the HDI for a country where the literacy rate is 75 percent would be 0.75. The scores of all indicators are then averaged into the overall index.

For a more extensive examination of human development, as well as the ranking tables for each participating country, please visit: http://www.undp.org

Note on History sections

In some CountryWatch Country Reviews, open source content from the State Department Background Notes and Country Guides have been used.

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Note: Some or all these news services have been used to research various sections of this Country Review.

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Examples:

Youngblood-Coleman, Denise. *Country Review: France*. 2003. Houston, Texas: CountryWatch Publications, 2003. *Country Review:France*. Online. Available URL: http://www.countrywatch.com/cw_country.asp?vCOUNTRY=61 October, 12, 2003.
Note:
This is the citation format used when the print version is not used in the reference.

Parts of Works

Basic form, using an Internet protocol:

Author/editor. "Part title." *Title of Print Version of Work*. Edition statement (if given). Publication information (Place of publication: publisher, date), if given. *Title of Electronic Work*. Medium. AvailableProtocol (if applicable): Site/Path/File. Access date.

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Youngblood-Coleman, Denise. "People." *CountryWatch.com: France*. 2003. Houston, Texas: CountryWatch Publications, 2003. *CountryWatch.com: France*. Online. Available URL : http://www.countrywatch.com/cw_topic.asp?vCOUNTRY=61&SECTION=SOCIAL&TOPIC=CLPEO&TYPE=TEXT. October 12, 2003.

Note:
This is the citation format used when the print version is not used in the reference.

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