

## India-Mauritania Relations

**General:** Situated in the north-west of the African continent on the Atlantic coast, the **Islamic Republic of Mauritania** is home to less than 3.5 million people spread in 13 administrative regions. The country has a democratically elected President in Mr (Gen) Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz since August 2009. He was re-elected with a landslide victory in June 2014.

Mauritania is an Arabized African Islamic Republic, with almost cent percent of its inhabitants following Islam. The governance is strongly influenced by the Sharia. Nouakchott is the largest and the capital city. Nouadhibou and Kiffa are two other major cities. Arabic is the official language and Ouguiyas (MRO) is the currency. Neither India, nor Mauritania, has their resident Embassies in each others' country. India, however, has a token representation in the form of an Honorary Consulate in Nouakchott.

**President:** H.E. Mr. Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz (re elected in June 2014)

**Prime Minister:** H.E. Mr. Yahya Ould Hademine (since 20/8/14)

**Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation:** H.E. Mrs. Her Excellency Vatma Vall Mint Soueina (Since 16/1/2015)

**Geography:** The country shares its borders with Senegal (813 km) on the southwest, by Mali (2237km) on the southeast and east, by Algeria (463km) on the northeast and by Morocco controlled Western Sahara (1561km) on the northwest. With an area of 1.03 million Sq Kms, largely deserted, it is the 11<sup>th</sup> largest country in Africa.

**Ethnic groups:** Ethnically, modern Mauritania consists of dominant Moorish tribes, Berbers, sub-Saharan African tribes like Soninke and Wolof, and descendents of Arabized black African slaves (Haratine). Moors consists of approx 80% of the population.

**Economy:** Apart from fisheries, Mauritania's extensive mineral resources include iron ore, gold, copper, gypsum, and phosphate rock and exploration is ongoing for uranium, crude oil, and natural gas. The import items include machinery, equipment, petroleum products, capital goods, food stuff and consumer goods. Mauritania is a regular recipient of foreign development assistance-institutional, bilateral and multilateral. Extractive commodities make up 75% of Mauritania's total exports.

**Economic Agenda:** The government's investment and development strategy emphasizes private sector development, which is seen as the main engine of economic growth. Privatization, liberalization, and investment incentives figure prominently in Mauritania's previous World Bank and IMF structural reform programs. Foreign investment is welcome in most sectors. The Investment Code uses privatization and liberalization to encourage foreign investors and guarantees companies the freedom to transfer most capital and wages abroad. The government of Mauritania has recently

embarked on a programme for the large scale integrated development of Nouadhibou Free Zone for development of Nouadhibou Bay and is offering huge incentives.

**Trade and Investment opportunities vis a vis India-** There exists considerable potential for economic cooperation with Mauritania. The mining, fishing, agricultural, banking, petroleum, technology and tourism sectors are actively seeking foreign direct investment. The Mauritanian government has, on numerous occasions, conveyed its eagerness to increase bilateral cooperation with India. The government of Mauritania has recently embarked on a programme for the large scale integrated development of Nouadhibou Free Zone for development of Nouadhibou Bay and is offering huge incentives. The existing trade balance is insignificant, heavily in favour of India.

### **Bilateral Relations:**

- i. **Bilateral agreements:** Nil
- ii. **Bilateral Visits:** No bilateral visit has taken place during the last three years.
- iii. **Direct and indirect assistance:** Apart from direct bilateral assistance, Mauritania is entitled to Indian assistance through NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development) and through other IAFS initiatives.
- iv. **Lines of Credit:** India has extended two lines of credit to Mauritania- US\$ 15 million towards agro-industries and US\$6.8 million towards a drinking water project. Both the projects are progressing satisfactorily. The savings from the total project cost are to be used for acquisition of harvesters and agricultural machinery by the Government of Mauritania. The proposal is in advanced stage of consideration. The Government of India has recently approved another LOC of USD 65.68 million for a Solar-Diesel Hybrid Rural Electrification Project in Mauritania.
- v. **ITEC training slots:** The number of slots offered to Mauritania for 2015-16 is 15.

### **Other Scholarships:**

- i. Under various other initiatives of the India-Africa Forum Summits.
- ii. Agricultural scholarships are administered through the African Union.
- iii. Scholarships for higher studies under the Africa Scholarship Scheme (ASC).
- vi. **Pan-African e-Network Project:** This project is operational in Mauritania
- vii. **Bilateral Trade:** The existing trade balance is heavily in favour of India and is low in value.
- viii. **Offer of English language Training Centre:** Under the IAFS initiative, India has offered a Centre for English Language Training to Mauritania. Matter is still under process.
- ix. **Offer of Human Settlement Centre:** India has offered to Mauritania establishment of a Human Settlement Centre under an IAFS initiative. Terms of agreement are under negotiation.
- x. **Offer of Farm Science Centre:** Under the IAFS initiative, India has also offered a Farm Science Centre to Mauritania under the India-AU Technical Cooperation Programme under IAFS I.

**Indian Community in Mauritania: Indians /Indian enterprises in Mauritania:** The number of Indians in Mauritania is estimated to be around 200. Minor Indian presence is evident in the mining, power, steel, cement, pharmaceuticals, oil and gas exploration and agro industrial units. Few Indian companies are also involved in projects executions under various LOCs extended to Mauritania by India and other international organizations.

**Main foreign policy priorities of Mauritania**

- i. Consolidation of cooperation with neighboring countries.
- ii. Peaceful solution to conflicts within the Arab world and Africa
- iii. Revitalization of the role of regional organizations.
- iv. Economic consolidation of the country based on direct foreign investment and domestic policies.
- v. Territorial status of Western Sahara is a major foreign policy issue.

**G-5 Sahel Initiative:** In February 2014, during a Summit of Heads of State of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania, Mali and Niger the establishment of a regional organization called G5 of the Sahel was formed to strengthen cooperation on development and security in the Sahel region. President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz was elected the first Chair of the grouping.

**Useful Resources:**

Embassy of India, Bamako website:

<http://www.amb-inde-bamako.org/>

Embassy of India, Bamako Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/indembassybamako>

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