



commission for environmental impact assessment

Président du Conseil Militaire pour la Justice
et la Démocratie, Chef d'Etat

Colonel Ely Ould Mohamed Vall

your reference

your letter of
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our reference
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Impact Assessment

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Your Excellency,

In March 2006 the Royal Netherlands Embassy requested the Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment (NCEA) to present an advice on the Terms of Reference (ToR) for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) on your behalf. This SEA aims to support important choices to be made in order to set a strategic framework for future oil and gas development in your country. I am happy herewith to present this advice. It not only addresses the desirable content of the SEA report but also contains recommendations on how to organize the integrated plan/SEA process itself, of which the report will be a part. In the SEA process the discussion within your government and with other Mauritanian stakeholders on objectives of the strategic framework, possible policy alternatives and scope of the SEA, is essential. Therefore, the recommendations of the NCEA on these issues should be seen as input for this discussion, leading to a final decision on the ToR by your government.

An adequate institutional structure of decision making is indispensable and a prerequisite to be able to direct developments towards desired sustainability. In this respect your initiative to install an Environmental Commission with a strong mandate and the appointment of a Secretary of State responsible for the Environmental Commission is a highly effective measure. It enables immediate action in order to timely respond to the fast developments in the hydrocarbon industry and avoids a situation in which the Government of Mauritania can only follow these developments instead of controlling them. In the view of the NCEA, the tasks of the Environmental Commission could include for the short term:

- o a decision upon the ToR for the SEA
- o decisions by decree about individual projects on a case by case basis, as long as the legal framework is not yet in place
- o development of a long term programme to improve legislation on environmental standards for oil/gas development
- o elaboration of a programme for capacity development and learning.

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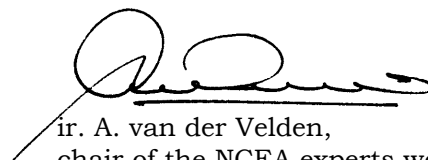
For the long term the Environmental Commission could implement legislative improvements and implement the programme for capacity development. In my opinion the recent report on the Oil and Gas development in Mauritania prepared on behalf of your Ministry of Energy and Petrol gives valuable recommendations in responsibilities and tasks of an institution such as the installed Environmental Commission.

All parties involved within and outside the government of Mauritania recognize the fact that at this moment, capacity and expertise of the Mauritanian Government to control the developments, is insufficient and needs the support of international experts. In this respect, such support for the Environmental Commission is very important. In addition, a stakeholder forum consisting of representatives of involved Ministries, IUCN, PRCM, PNBA, National Park Diawling and fishery communities could advice the Environmental Commission, thus creating public support for the decisions to be made.

As important as the environmental impacts of the oil and gas business are the social impacts of the revenue flows. Therefore, a transparent and long term oriented revenue management facilitated, among other things, by a designated fund, is necessary to make Mauritanian society benefit as a whole. The initiatives taken by the Mauritanian Government to legislate the appropriation of the revenues from the extractive industry in this respect are essential. In order to create maximum transparency I would also like to advice you to evaluate and reconsider the position of the "Société Mauritanian des Hydrocarbures" because it is part of Mauritanian Government and at the same time it has commercial interests.

With the enclosed advice on SEA process and content, the NCEA hopes to contribute to your policy aim to establish good governance and to create a balance between oil and gas development and the interests of the fishery communities and natural values, thus leading to a sustainable development of Mauritania.

Yours sincerely,



ir. A. van der Velden,
chair of the NCEA experts working group