
COUNTRY REPORT

Senegal
The Gambia
Mauritania

1st quarter 1998

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The Economist Intelligence Unit

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London The Economist Intelligence Unit 15 Regent Street London SW1Y 4LR United Kingdom Tel: (44.171) 830 1000 Fax: (44.171) 499 9767 e-mail: london@eiu.com	New York The Economist Intelligence Unit The Economist Building 111 West 57th Street New York NY 10019, US Tel: (1.212) 554 0600 Fax: (1.212) 586 1181/2 e-mail: newyork@eiu.com	Hong Kong The Economist Intelligence Unit 25/F, Dah Sing Financial Centre 108 Gloucester Road Wanchai Hong Kong Tel: (852) 2802 7288 Fax: (852) 2802 7638 e-mail: hongkong@eiu.com
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Website: <http://www.eiu.com>

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New York: Lou Celi or Lisa Hennessey Tel: (1.212) 554 0600 Fax: (1.212) 586 0248
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March 5th 1998 Summary

1st quarter 1998

Senegal Outlook for 1998-99: The prospects for peace in Casamance have improved, as the hardline factions of the separatist MFDC find themselves increasingly isolated politically. The opposition stands a good chance of gaining seats in the May legislative elections, while a dissident faction of the ruling PS may field independent candidates. GDP growth is forecast to slacken slightly in 1998, because of poor agricultural performance, but pick up again in 1999. The impetus for structural reform will be maintained under the new ESAF.

The political scene: The ruling PS faces a major internal challenge, as a former interior minister has launched a new political movement. The economy minister has stepped down and a new interior minister has been appointed. The number of parliamentary seats has been raised to 140. The creation of an upper chamber, the Senate, is still on the agenda. The army continues to have the upper hand in Casamance, as hardline separatists clash with other MFDC forces. The Gambia has offered to mediate, while Guinea-Bissau is clamping down on Casamance rebels on its side of the border.

The economy: Another tranche of the state telecommunications company has been sold to the public, while the part privatisation of the electricity utility is planned. The 1998 budget proposes another modest deficit while revenue from privatisation has been used to cover some 1997 revenue shortfalls and overspending. A new three-year ESAF was signed with the local IMF mission. Real GDP growth was estimated at 5.2% for 1997, when tourism reached a record high. The cereal deficit has risen. The phosphate company ICS increased its output last year, with a \$185m turnover. New aid new deals have been signed with France and other donors.

The Gambia Outlook for 1998-99: The confidence and international standing of the Jammeh administration is rising, with the prospect of mediation in Senegal's Casamance war. With aid inflow picking up, the government will press ahead on transport infrastructure projects. But the economy remains fragile and will remain modest, at around the 3.2% targeted for 1998.

The political scene: President Jammeh's offer to mediate in the Senegalese Casamance conflict has been welcomed by the Senegalese authorities. The president has called on all Gambians in exile to return home—including the former president, Sir Dawda Jawara. The government has denied allegations in the German media that \$90m in gold belonging to Mobutu Sese Seko, the late president of what was then Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo), was concealed in The Gambia. The Congolese authorities have launched an investigation. A Ghanaian journalist was deported in November and a local radio station shut down in February. The Gambia was appointed a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council.

The economy: Cereal production fell by one-quarter in 1997. Health and education are to receive funding from the African Development Bank, OPEC

and the Islamic Development Bank. The Trust Bank of The Gambia has taken over Meridien BIAO, with an eye to eventual privatisation.

Mauritania Outlook for 1998-99: The president has been re-elected to a second six-year term. The composition of the government will continue to be fluid, and the new minister of interior will maintain the media crackdown. Another year of 5% GDP growth is forecast for 1998, but the depreciation of the ouguiya and the recovery in monetary expansion will exert inflationary pressure.

The political scene: The incumbent president, Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya, won the December election by a landslide, with 90% of the vote in the first round. The opposition disputed the results and has claimed massive rigging. A relative unknown has been appointed prime minister. Two minor cabinet re-shuffles have already taken place. Three human rights activists have been imprisoned for spreading allegations of slavery in Mauritania.

The economy: The 1998 draft budget proposes a 12% rise in spending. Crop production halved in 1996/97. An oil prospecting consortium is still looking for partners, while General Gold resources is negotiating for IFC equity participation.

Editor: Charlotte Vaillant
All queries: Tel: (44.171) 830 1007 Fax: (44.171) 830 1023

Senegal

Political structure

Official name	République du Sénégal	
Form of state	Unitary republic	
Legal system	Based on the Napoleonic Code and the 1963 constitution	
National legislature	National Assembly, with 120 members elected by universal suffrage on a part first-past-the-post (50) and part proportional representation (70) system; all serve a five-year term	
National elections	February 1993 (presidential), May 1993 (legislative); next elections due on May 24th 1998 (legislative) and in February 2000 (presidential)	
Head of state	President, elected by universal suffrage, serves a seven-year term and may stand for re-election	
National government	The president and his Council of Ministers; last major reshuffle March 1995	
Main political parties	Parti socialiste (PS) is the ruling party within a government of national unity; Parti démocratique sénégalais (PDS—the main opposition party); Parti de l'indépendance et du travail (PIT); Ligue démocratique-Mouvement pour le parti du travail (LD-MPT); Parti pour la libération du peuple (PLP); And-jéf/Parti africain pour la démocratie et le socialisme (AJ/PADS)	
Ministers of state	President	Abdou Diouf
	Prime minister	Habib Thiam
Ministers of state	Agriculture	Robert Sagna
	At the presidency	Abdoulaye Wade (PDS)
	Foreign affairs & Senegalese abroad	Moustapha Niasse
	Presidential affairs	Ousmane Tanor Dieng
Key ministers	Armed forces	Cheikh Hamidou Kane
	Commerce, crafts & industry	Idrissa Seck (PDS)
	Communications	Serigne Diop (PDS-R)
	Economy, finance & planning	Mamadou Lamine Loum
	Education	André Sonkho
	Energy, mines & industry	Magued Diouf
	Environment & protection of nature	Abdoulaye Bathily (LD-MPT)
	Fisheries & marine transport	Alassane Dialy Ndiaye
	Interior	Lamine Cissé
	Justice & keeper of seals	Jacques Baudin
	Labour & employment	Assane Diop
	Public health & social action	Ousmane Ngom (PDS)
Tourism & air transport	Tidiane Sylla	
Urban planning & housing	Abdourahmane Sow	
Governor of the BCEAO	Charles Konan Banny	

Economic structure

Latest available figures

Economic indicators	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997 ^a
GDP at market prices (CFAfr bn)	1,589	2,155	2,430	2,638	2,830
Real GDP growth (%)	-0.7	2	4.8 ^b	5.2	5.2 ^c
Consumer price inflation (%; av)	-0.5	32.3	7.8	2.8	1.8 ^c
Population (m)	7.9	8.1	8.3	8.6	8.8
Exports fob (\$ m)	737	819	993	986 ^{ac}	947
Imports fob (\$ m)	11,087	1,022	1,243	1,267 ^{ac}	1,190
Current account (\$ m)	-279	3	-57	-138 ^{ac}	-180
Reserves excl gold (\$ m)	3.4	179.6	271.8	288.3	302.5 ^d
Total external debt (\$ m)	3,766	3,659	3,845	3,920 ^a	3,945
External debt-service ratio (%)	8.9	16.3	17.6	15.5 ^a	13.7
Groundnut production ^e ('000 tonnes)	628	718	791	680	n/a
Exchange rate (av; CFAfr:\$)	283.2	555.2	499.2	511.6	588.7 ^f

February 27th 1998 CFAfr608.93:\$1

Origins of gross domestic product 1996	% of total	Components of gross domestic product 1996	% of total
Primary sector	21.4	Private consumption	79.1
Secondary sector	19.9	Government consumption	10.6
Tertiary sector	58.7	Gross domestic investment	15.2
GDP at factor cost	100.0	Exports of goods & services	31.2
		Imports of goods & services	-36.0
		GDP at market prices	100.0

Principal exports 1996	\$ m	Principal imports 1996	\$ m
Fish & fish products	284.0	Intermediate goods	407.6
Chemicals (ICS plant)	130.0	Food products	387.8
Groundnut products	85.4	Capital goods	189.0
Phosphates	36.4	Petroleum products	187.9

Main destinations of exports 1996 ^g	% of total	Main origins of imports 1995 ^g	% of total
France	20.3	France	35.5
India	18.5	Germany	4.7
Italy	8.5	US	3.6
Mali	6.5	India	3.2

^a EIU estimates. ^b BCEAO estimate. ^c IMF estimate. ^d June actual. ^e Unshelled; crop years beginning October. ^f Actual. ^g Derived from partners' trade returns, subject to a wide margin of error.

Outlook for 1998-99

The military tide has turned against the Casamance separatists—

The hardline Southern Front of the Casamance separatist *Mouvement des forces démocratiques de Casamance* (MFDC) has suffered heavy losses on the battlefield, with most of its bases near the border with Guinea-Bissau destroyed by late November through heavy Senegalese artillery and infantry assaults. In desperation, the remnants of the MFDC in the region have turned to highway robbery, the laying of landmines and a series of dramatic attacks in major towns. While the rebels' intention may have been to signal that the insurgency still has strength, the main effect seems to have been to increase the MFDC's alienation from important sections of the population it claims to represent. The decision of the government of Guinea-Bissau to crack down on MFDC activities on its side of the border, combined with efforts by the MFDC's Northern Front to block incursions by Southern Front units has undermined those within the MFDC who favour continuing the insurgency.

—improving the prospects for peace talks

The most prominent of the MFDC's political leaders, Father Augustin Diamacoune Senghor, has taken advantage of the weakening of the Southern Front to try to re-assert his tenuous authority over the fractious movement and urge a resumption of the peace process. This has included a public denunciation of the laying of landmines and other exactions against the civilian population, a move the Senegalese authorities had earlier suggested as a precondition for direct talks. Meanwhile, the pressures on the Senegalese government to turn to the negotiating table have also been mounting, with both France and the US urging an end to hostilities. If the MFDC factions can unite around a negotiating posture in the coming months, the prospects for renewed talks will improve considerably.

The ruling party faces internal dissent—

With the May 24th legislative elections rapidly approaching, the political temperature in Dakar is rising markedly. As was the case before the local and regional government elections in November 1996, the survival of the unity government formed by the president, Abdou Diouf, has come under question as the ruling *Parti socialiste* (PS) and the opposition *Parti démocratique sénégalais* (PDS) gear up their campaigns and hurl more political invective at each other. The new development, however, is that the perennial factional conflicts within the PS have burst directly into the centre of political debate, with the formation of an internal organised grouping, or "current", called the *Renouveau démocratique* led by a former minister, Djibo Ka. Sanctions by the PS's leadership bodies and direct harassment by the state authorities have not dissuaded these dissidents from setting the stage for a possible independent campaign by Mr Ka and his colleagues. The electoral impact of such a campaign is likely to be contradictory, however; it would certainly attract some support from PS voters, but it could also garner votes that would otherwise go to the main opposition parties. The PDS and other smaller opposition parties are, however, expected to gain some additional seats in the next parliament.

—which it hopes to ease by creating more elected positions

Plagued by internal rifts, the PS pinned its hopes of increasing its already strong political influence on pushing through major parliamentary revisions; in early February, the parliament approved a law whereby the National Assembly was

increased from 120 to 140 seats, with half elected proportionally and half by majority vote, a greater share of majority-vote seats than in the old assembly. Since the PS is dominant nationally, and the opposition only has strongholds in some major cities, such an arrangement would have favoured the ruling party.

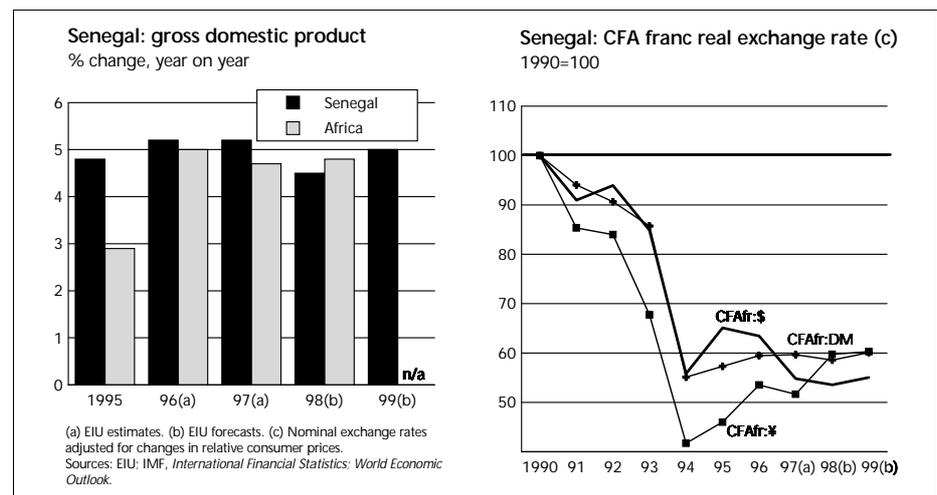
Although the PS's plan first misfired when the PDS succeeded in swaying the Constitutional Court into annulling the amendment, the ruling party demonstrated its overwhelming dominance in parliament and its control over the state apparatus, by re-introducing the bill in March. The PS, helped by the amended electoral code, is expected to keep a comfortable majority in parliament for another five-year term. An additional benefit for the PS is that the creation of so many new seats will make it easier to arrange patronage positions for the party's disgruntled faction leaders. A new 60-seat Senate is also to be created after the elections, with 15 seats filled by presidential nomination and the remainder chosen by the country's elected officials, who are overwhelmingly PS.

GDP growth is set to slacken very slightly—

The outlook continues to be one of a slight flagging in the pace of GDP growth this year, and a recovery in the rate next. The poor rains of late 1997 have depressed agricultural production severely, dragging down overall economic growth rates through into this year. Figures recently released by the IMF indicate GDP growth of 5.2% in 1997, and the government expects the rate to slow to 4.5% in 1998. For 1999 we expect a slight pick-up in the rate, to around the 5% of 1996 and 1997, as agricultural output recovers (under reasonable climatic conditions and as a result of crop diversification) and the mining sector attracts growing investment—inflationary pressures will remain low, with ratios below 2%.

—and the impetus of structural reform should be maintained

The recent signing of an enhanced structural adjustment facility (ESAF) for 1998-2000—the third such programme—confirms the commitment to maintain a process of structural reform which will underpin sustained economic growth. It also provides a politically helpful vote of confidence in the PS administration.



Senegal: forecast summary
(\$ m unless otherwise indicated)

	1996 ^a	1997 ^b	1998 ^c	1999 ^c
Real GDP (% change)	5.2	5.2	4.5	5.0
Consumer price inflation (%; av)	2.8	1.8	2.8	2.5
Merchandise exports fob	986 ^b	947	1,004	1,058
Merchandise imports fob	1,267 ^b	1,190	1,218	1,254
Current-account balance	-138 ^b	-180	-166	-151
Average exchange rate (CFAfr:\$)	512	589 ^a	607	590

^a Actual. ^b EIU/IMF estimates. ^c EIU forecasts.

Review

The political scene

The PS faces a major internal challenge—

With the largest party machine and the best prospects of its candidates winning, the ruling Parti socialiste (PS) has frequently been stricken by factional strife. The most serious internal challenge developed in October 1997, when a former interior minister, Djibo Ka, publicly launched the *Renouveau démocratique*, which he styled as a political grouping, or “current”, within the PS. In addition to former ministers such as Mr Ka and Abdourahmane Touré, several serving members of parliament signed their names to the current’s documents, including the vice-president of the National Assembly, Mbaye Diouf. While carefully excluding the president, Abdou Diouf, from its criticisms, the *Renouveau démocratique* charged that the PS was in “crisis” because its current leadership continued to act as if Senegal still had a one-party political culture. Echoing the accusations of the opposition, Mr Ka denounced the “organic links” that bind the state apparatus and the PS. More specifically, the leaders of the movement argued that the re-organisation of the PS’s national and regional structures, which took place between 1994 and 1996 and brought the ouster of numerous long-time leaders, had been carried out in an undemocratic manner, and that the national congress of the party in March 1996 was a stage-managed affair, without real discussion. They warned that if reforms were not carried out within the party, they might present an independent slate of candidates in the May legislative elections, a move that would be tantamount to an open split.

—just six months before the legislative elections

With the approach of the May 24th legislative elections, the political temperature in Dakar has risen sharply. Nonetheless, many political commentators in Senegal have characterised the emergence of the *Renouveau démocratique* as primarily a reflection of factional disgruntlement. They note that Mr Ka’s role as a “dissident” is a very recent one, and that until 1996 he had in fact been considered Mr Diouf’s heir apparent, a position now occupied by the PS secretary-general, Ousmane Tanor Dieng. Further questioning his sincerity as a champion of political pluralism and democratic debate, some have also pointed to his past efforts in ensuring continued PS dominance over the state administration and, as minister of the interior, in banning strikes and demonstrations or otherwise seeking to silence anti-government criticisms. Whatever the motivations of the *Renouveau*

démocratique leaders, however, their decision to take their criticisms directly to the public constituted a significant and overt challenge to the PS leadership. Ibrahima Gaye, the editor of the government-owned and pro-PS daily *Le Soleil*, warned in a front-page commentary in late October that the group could serve as a poll of attraction for all sorts of “malcontents” within the party and, if it went so far as to enter the May elections under its own banner, tempt many PS supporters to cast protest votes for its candidates.

The PS leaders answer
with sanctions—

Predictably, various PS officials and bodies have denounced the Renouveau démocratique as “gangrene” and accused its leaders of being disloyal to the PS by seeking to weaken the party on the eve of the elections. In early November the party’s political bureau declared that the PS statutes did not recognise organised “currents” within it and warned that any attempt to field independent candidates would constitute automatic exclusion from the party. Mr Ka and ten others were subsequently suspended from the party for three months. They were also subjected to direct government action: in Kaolack and other venues, planned meetings of the Renouveau démocratique were prohibited and hotels, under pressure, refused to rent facilities for press conferences. In early December Mr Ka was taken by the police to a meeting at the interior ministry and then blocked from boarding a flight to Paris; the governor of the Dakar region, Maham Diallo, was relieved of his duties on suspicion of being close to the Renouveau démocratique. Mr Ka and a number of the opposition parties condemned these actions as harassment and an attempt by the PS leaders to use the government apparatus to settle an internal party dispute.

—while Mr Ka prepares
for an independent
campaign

Mr Ka remained defiant, stating that the Renouveau démocratique was ready for expulsion from the party. He and his colleagues began setting up local support committees around the country and launched a drive to collect enough signatures to place candidates on the ballot. They also announced plans to establish a students’ movement affiliated with the group. Mr Ka said that if the group was blocked from fielding an independent slate—since by law, it is not officially recognised as a party—it might attempt to forge electoral alliances with a number of opposition parties. Another faction within the PS, known as the Centre-Left, has also threatened to put up independent candidates if the party leadership does not hold an extraordinary congress before the elections.

The opposition parties
ponder their response—

The opposition parties, struggling with how best to position their own candidates, have reacted in different ways to the emergence of the Renouveau démocratique. The Parti démocratique sénégalais (PDS), while avoiding any definitive comment about alliances, urged it to leave the PS and form its own party. The leftist And-jéf/Parti africain pour la démocratie et le socialisme (AJ/PADS), citing Mr Ka’s past role in repressing political dissent, rejected any talk of alliance. Abdoulaye Bathily, the environment minister and leader of the Ligue démocratique-Mouvement pour le parti du travail (LD-MPT), said that his party would be open to an electoral bloc with the Renouveau démocratique, and that he had in fact already begun meeting with its leaders.

—while facing their own internal problems

A number of the opposition parties have been grappling with their own factional problems. Most dramatically, the Parti de l'indépendance et du travail (PIT) suffered a major split in November and December when several of its top leaders, including Samba Diouldé Thiam, a member of parliament, resigned over their opposition to the continued leadership of Amath Dansokho. Mr Thiam, accusing the PIT of adhering to a "monolithic" Marxist-Leninist ideology, launched his own party, the Mouvement de la gauche démocratique. Meanwhile, the pan-Africanist Rassemblement national démocratique (RND), originally founded by the renowned scholar Cheikh Anta Diop, merged in early January with the Parti pour la libération du peuple, which had split from the RND in 1983; the new party retains the RND's name.

The economy minister resigns—

The resignation of Papa Ousmane Sakho, the minister of economy, finance and planning, was announced on January 17th. The official explanation was reasons of health, but the independent press was soon full of reports of long-standing differences in economic policy and management between him and other members of the cabinet, especially the prime minister, Habib Thiam (see Economic policy). First named as economy minister in June 1993, Mr Sakho was one of the main architects of the emergency recovery plan announced by the government two months later to contain a spiralling budget deficit. Imposing salary cuts was deeply unpopular with the unions, but helped pave the way for a new financing agreement with the IMF, after years of strained relations. Described as pugnacious and a man of his word, Mr Sakho's firm adherence to the conditionalities of the IMF and World Bank won him the respect of the Bretton Woods institutions, even if it alienated politically influential sectors of the ruling PS.

—but his successor promises continuity

Replacing Mr Sakho is Mamadou Lamine Loum, formerly the deputy minister of the budget. Mr Loum was named to his budget post the same year as Mr Sakho became economy minister, and the two worked very closely together in negotiating and implementing the government's adjustment programmes. Although some of the Senegalese press question whether Mr Loum will be able to display the same firm hand as his predecessor, his appointment should provide assurance to the international financial institutions that the government plans to continue its established economic policies.

A general is brought in to organise the elections

At the same time as the change in the economy portfolio, Major-General Lamine Cissé was brought in to the cabinet as interior minister, replacing Abdourahmane Sow, who moved over to urban affairs and housing. General Cissé, who had retired as the army chief of staff just two weeks before his ministerial appointment, will be in charge of organising the elections, against the background of many previous irregularities at the ministry. Last September, Mr Diouf named another general, General Mamadou Niang, as head of the Observatoire national des élections (ONEL) the newly established election monitoring body (4th quarter 1997, pages 11-12). General Niang and General Cissé are both well known for their professionalism. In naming them to such sensitive positions in advance of the elections, Mr Diouf clearly hopes to allay opposition concerns about partisan favouritism. In addition to a "corrective" allocation for the functioning of the ONEL in the 1997 budget for CFAfr500m

(\$850,000), the government allowed another CFAfr800m in the 1998 budget, thus assuring the opposition that the ONEL will have the resources to do its job and ensure greater fairness and transparency in the next elections.

Strains deepen within the
unity government—

Following the cabinet reshuffle, the PDS leader, Abdoulaye Wade, who is also minister of state at the presidency, took advantage of Mr Sakho's known differences with the prime minister, Mr Thiam, to level a series of sharp criticisms at Mr Thiam. Most seriously, he accused the prime minister of mismanaging the fund for economic promotion, the Fonds de promotion économique (FPE), run directly out of the prime minister's office with loan funds from the African Development Bank (see Economic policy). Whatever the validity of Mr Wade's charges, which Mr Thiam has denied, the PDS leader was reproached for breaching governmental discipline, with Mr Diouf himself reportedly accusing him of being "irresponsible". Some PS leaders openly suggested that if Mr Wade was to persist in such political attacks, he and the four other PDS ministers may simply be dropped from the cabinet.

—but Mr Wade hopes to
keep his post

Meanwhile, Mr Wade has come under increased pressure from within his own party to leave the government, on the grounds that its continued participation simply confuses voters and that withdrawal would give it freer rein to pursue a more vigorous electoral campaign. A few days after the row between Mr Wade and Mr Thiam became public, the co-ordinating body of the PDS's party staff reiterated an earlier call for the PDS to pull out. Mr Wade, however, has continued to maintain that there is no contradiction between participating in the government and waging an opposition campaign. In a radio interview, he argued that on balance it was better to remain in the government, since this would help preserve "peace and tranquillity" during the elections.

Aspirant parliamentary
candidates jockey for
position

As in every pre-electoral period in Senegal, there is stiff competition to get on to a party's list of candidates. Since public office is seen as a way to gain access to patronage, crass jockeying for position often takes precedence over political programmes and platforms, contributing not only to fierce infighting within the larger parties, but also to the phenomenon of political "nomadism", in which local party bosses and their coteries switch from one party to another in search of more favourable arrangements. Virtually every week, in one locality or another, the PS announces that it has won over scores, if not hundreds, of former PDS leaders and supporters, while the PDS claims to be recruiting large numbers of dissidents from the PS. To cite just one example among many, on January 3rd the PS held a ceremony in Thiès, to welcome 480 new members who had just resigned from the PDS, while the very same day the PDS took in 520 former PS members in two other neighbourhoods of Thiès and in a nearby rural district.

The number of seats in
parliament is increased
by 20—

Benefiting from its comfortable majority of 86 out of the 120 seats in the National Assembly, the PS parliamentary caucus on February 4th pushed through a surprise amendment to the electoral code increasing the number of seats in the assembly to 140. The bill generated considerable debate and controversy, with the PDS's delegates boycotting the session and those of the PIT, RND and LD-MPT voting against it. In part, they were riled at the lack of prior

notice or time to study the bill. But they also objected to its provisions that half the seats be filled by majority vote in the constituencies and half by proportional vote from national party lists. Under the old arrangement, 70 seats were elected proportionally, a practice that makes it somewhat easier for the opposition to gain seats, and 50 by majority vote, which clearly favours the dominant PS. In recent months the opposition had in fact been pressing for amendments that would increase the number of proportional seats to 80 and reduce those by majority vote to 40. The PS's amendment, however, pushed the balance in the opposite direction, retaining 70 proportional seats but increasing by 20 the number of majority vote positions.

—despite being ruled out by the Constitutional Court

On February 10th, however, the PDS decided to file a suit against the amendment of the electoral code, claiming that it was against the Senegalese constitution. Two weeks later the Constitutional Court took the PDS's side and declared the amendment inadmissible. The opposition hailed the decision as attesting to the independence of the highest court in the country. On March 3rd, however, the ruling party succeeded in forcing through the bill in parliament for the second time. The opposition PDS boycotted the vote and called on the Senegalese to hold protest marches.

A Senate is to be created

In another move likely to increase the PS's representation, a bill was pushed through on February 13th to set up a new chamber of parliament. Known as the Senate, it will have 60 seats, 15 of them filled by nomination by the president and 45 by selection in an electoral college comprising all parliamentary deputies and municipal, rural and regional councillors (about 13,000 electors). Even though the 45 will all be elected proportionally by region, the PS's domination of the local and regional government structures will ensure that the ruling party takes all but a handful of the elected senatorial seats. There again, the opposition parties strongly objected to the establishment of a Senate and boycotted the vote, stating that it serves little purpose except to provide the PS with additional seats that it can allocate to disgruntled faction leaders. The Senate, which will not be set up until some time after the May elections, will consider and vote on most bills. In the event of a difference with the National Assembly over specific legislation, a joint committee will be set up to try to resolve the differences, but if that fails, the National Assembly has the deciding voice.

Pressures build on the Casamance rebels to move toward talks—

After several months of renewed war in Senegal's southern region of Casamance, costing hundreds of lives, the new year brought the first signs that the fractured leadership of the separatist Mouvement des forces démocratiques de Casamance (MFDC) may be moving towards a serious effort to resume peace talks with the Senegalese government. In December the government allowed representatives of the MFDC's external wing to travel to Ziguinchor, the Casamançais capital, for consultations with other factions within the rebel movement; these included Father Augustin Diamacoune Senghor, the MFDC's best-known political figure, and leaders of the Northern Front, who have been observing a ceasefire in the areas under their control since 1991. The Southern Front, the most hardline faction of the MFDC, led by Salif Sadio, stayed away from the meeting. The Southern Front has suffered heavy losses on the ground

and finds itself increasingly isolated politically, both from neighbouring countries and from significant portions of the Casamançais population.

—and the MFDC's Father Senghor denounces rebel exactions

On January 13th Father Senghor held a news conference in Ziguinchor, with the Northern Front leader, Sidy Badji, at his side, to proclaim that the Casamance problem could be resolved “only through face-to-face talks, around a table”. This he has stated before, but more significantly, he went on to criticise in very sharp terms those MFDC guerrillas who have increased attacks against sectors of the Casamançais population itself: “No more mines, no more shootings of civilians, of women and children, no more destroying of houses, of works of art, no more thefts or destruction of property”. He called on the MFDC rebels to obey his request “immediately and totally”.

The army has the upper hand—

Since the fighting flared up in August, the Senegalese army has greatly augmented its strength in the region, from 1,000 to 3,000 troops, backed up by 105-mm artillery and reconnaissance planes. The military's basic strategy has been to conduct systematic sweeps of known MFDC areas, principally in the forests along the border with Guinea-Bissau, first spotting rebel concentrations by air, then bombarding them with artillery, and finally sweeping through with infantry. Some of the fiercest fighting took place in late November in the Guidel and Babadinka valleys near the border, reportedly initiated by MFDC units trying to retake the local fruit and cashew plantations that had been a major source of their revenue. Although the army has claimed scores of rebel deaths in such encounters, it has reported taking only a handful of prisoners, suggesting a no-mercy policy by the paracommandos, who call themselves “bad boys” (using the English term). Despite vigorous denials by the government, human rights groups such as Amnesty International have accused the army of also summarily executing several dozen civilians suspected of rebel ties. During one of the rare journalist tours of the region the army has permitted, the commander of the Ziguinchor zone, Colonel Yoro Koné, used the term “terrorist friends of the MFDC” to describe villagers who aid the rebels.

—as the rebels shift to robbery and landmines—

At the time of writing, there have been no major battles between the army and organised MFDC contingents in southern Casamance since late November. Most rebel bases in the area appear to have been destroyed, with the surviving insurgents breaking up into smaller groups, dispersing into other parts of Casamance, or fleeing with refugees across the border into Guinea-Bissau. Seeking to minimise costly direct encounters with the army, these fragmented MFDC units have shifted tactics, leading to a step-up in highway ambushes and armed robberies of stores and wealthy homes to acquire funds and supplies (some of which may be the work of criminal gangs, although the government tends to blame all such actions on the MFDC). MFDC units clearly have been responsible for the increased prevalence of landmines along both major and minor roads, resulting in dozens of civilian deaths, growing criticisms by prominent Casamançais and sharp denunciations by human rights organisations. Several dramatic night-time attacks in Ziguinchor, Oussouye and other towns also appear to have heightened the population's sense of insecurity.

—and clash with other MFDC forces in northern Casamance

Hammered by the army in the southern border regions, some elements of the MFDC's Southern Front have moved northwards, up to the border with The Gambia, an area that has been at relative peace ever since the MFDC's Northern Front agreed to a ceasefire in 1991. As elsewhere, this has brought a sharp rise in robberies and attacks, including in Bignona and other northern Casamance towns. Outraged by such incursions into their "own" territory, forces of the Northern Front have been clashing with these Southern Front elements since October. In January the military commander of the Northern Front, Kamougoué Diatta, ordered large-scale operations in the department of Bignona against an insurgent group led by Ousmane Goudiaby. The latter has been operating virtually independently, having been expelled from both the Northern and Southern Fronts at different times in recent years. Following several days of often heavy fighting, Mr Goudiaby reportedly was pushed across the border into The Gambia.

Guinea-Bissau cracks down on its side of the border—

The government of Guinea-Bissau in early January began clamping down on rebel activities on its territory. In a series of actions near the border with Senegal, Guinean troops were reported to have destroyed several MFDC bases, killed a dozen insurgents and captured another 40. Hitherto, the rebels had been able to operate relatively freely from Guinean territory, mingling with the 15,000-20,000 refugees who have fled there, resting and resupplying, and then striking back into Senegal. Dakar had already put considerable pressure on the Guinean authorities to limit such activities, but it was an increase in robberies and other rebel violence on its side of the border that seems to have finally spurred Bissau to take action. Guinea-Bissau's transport minister, Joao Gomes Cardoso, visiting Dakar at the time of the clashes, said that the army's crackdown was designed to reduce "exactions against civilians" and prevent the Casamance separatists from "invading our country". He also pledged support for a plan by the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to move many of the refugees concentrated along the border area further into the country, so as to prevent the MFDC from using the refugee camps as military bases.

—as international calls for peace mount

The Gambian government has also been disturbed by the resurgence of fighting in Casamance, and at the beginning of January the president of The Gambia, Yahyah Jammeh, offered to mediate between Dakar and the MFDC. Senegal's ambassador in Banjul, Madieng Khary Dieng, welcomed the offer, noting that Mr Jammeh is a Diola, from the same ethnic group as the bulk of the MFDC fighters, and may therefore be in a good position to win their trust. Beyond the region itself, the French government in late October "deplored" the resumption of warfare and urged both the Senegalese government and the rebels to seek a non-military solution. In virtually similar terms, the US government in December expressed concern over the increase in violence in Casamance and human rights abuses, and called for a rapid resumption of peace talks.

Economic policy

More SONATEL shares are sold to the public—

After the sale last July of 33.3% of the shares of the state-owned telecommunications company, the Société nationale des télécommunications (SONATEL), to France-Télécom and the subsequent discounted sale of 10% to the enterprise's

employees, another 17.7% was placed on public offer on December 19th through the new regional stock exchange of the eight-country Union économique et monétaire ouest-africaine (UEMOA), which opened for trading in Abidjan just the day before. To encourage broad participation, 65% of the shares were reserved for Senegalese nationals and institutions (with individual investors receiving a slight discount), 15% for investors in other UEMOA member-states, and the remainder for international financial institutions. Since SONATEL is one of the country's largest and best-performing enterprises, with an estimated turnover in 1997 of CFAfr75bn (\$127m), the shares went fast. By early January the full offer had been subscribed, bringing in CFAfr33bn. Significantly, considering the generally low national savings rate of 12% of GDP in Senegal, some 9,000 individual Senegalese shareholders bought shares, for which they paid CFAfr17bn.

—but the government proceeds cautiously on SENELEC

Because of stiff opposition from the trade unions to the privatisation of the Société nationale sénégalaise d'électricité (SENELEC), including a threat in December to plunge the country into darkness if privatisation plans are pursued, the government has moved cautiously on proposals to sell off the national power company. On January 16th President Abdou Diouf signed a decree authorising SENELEC be opened up to private participation, but pledging that it would remain a "majority public" company for the time being. Under the arrangement, a 33% slice will be sold to an external "strategic partner". The government will retain 51% of the shares, but out of that would be willing to sell 10% to SENELEC employees, if they opt to buy them before the end of 1998. This would reduce the government share to 41% and effectively mark the company's privatisation. The largest union among the employees, the militant Syndicat unique des travailleurs de l'électricité (SUTELEC), accepts opening the company to private participation but has been strongly opposed to outright privatisation. It maintains that the workers have no interest in buying shares, but there are signs that some sectors of the workforce may be more open to the idea.

The 1998 budget projects a further increase in receipts—

On December 27th, before the cabinet change, the National Assembly approved the government's 1998 budget bill. It projects CFAfr516.8bn (\$86m) in income and CFAfr570.3bn (\$95m) in expenditure, leaving a deficit of CFAfr53.5bn, 1.5% higher than the budgeted deficit in 1997. The government hopes to cover this deficit through Paris Club debt rescheduling, IMF drawings, a structural adjustment grant from Japan, and World Bank loans. On the revenue side, fiscal receipts are expected to rise to CFAfr442bn, an increase of 9.4% over 1997, with the largest increases in direct taxes and value-added tax. The wages bill is hardly expected to rise, despite frequent agitation by the public-sector unions. In introducing the budget, the then finance minister, Papa Ousmane Sakho, said that the government, because of the still-precarious nature of its finances, faced a choice between raising salaries or increasing investments in job-creating activities, and chose the latter. A total of CFAfr310bn is slated for investment, of which CFAfr71bn will come from Senegal's domestic resources (a hefty increase of 42% over the amount in 1997). Of the remaining investment resources, CFAfr147.8 will come from borrowing and CFAfr91.2bn from aid grants. Also on the expenditure side, CFAfr197bn will be devoted to

debt servicing, of which CFAfr34.8bn is for domestic debt and CFAfr162.2bn for external debt.

—while SONATEL's sale will cover some 1997 overspending

The sale of one-third of SONATEL to France-Télécom in July, for CFAfr65bn (\$110m), provided the government with a bonus in 1997. In early December parliament passed a bill submitted by Mr Sakho amending the 1997 budget law by retroactively allocating this exceptional income (the above comparisons between the 1998 and 1997 budgets do not take these 1997 adjustments into account). Of the total, some CFAfr5bn went to cover a short-fall in revenue, resulting mainly from the impact of exchange-rate changes on customs receipts from oil imports. Another CFAfr35bn was applied to unexpected expenses in 1997, such as the creation of the ONEL, additional military purchases resulting from the Casamance war, the lengthening of the school year because of prolonged student strikes at the start of 1997, and a variety of other costs, as well as to cover CFAfr17bn in arrears payments that had not been budgeted for. The remaining CFAfr25bn went to new investments, including an additional 1,500 classrooms and refurbishment of existing schools, health equipment, irrigation and livestock projects, and rural electrification; although budgeted for 1997, the actual disbursement of these investment funds will of necessity carry over into 1998.

Mr Sakho's departure exposes differences over financial management—

The reports on Mr Sakho's resignation in *Sud Quotidien*, *Wal Fadjri* and other independent papers suggest very strongly that he had a tough time imposing the principle that his ministry should act as the central manager of all development funds, with the goal of ensuring budgetary discipline. While full details or even solid confirmation are lacking, several conflicts emerge in these reports. Mr Sakho appears to have been reluctant to bail out the troubled economic promotion fund, the Fonds de promotion économique (FPE), which is managed directly by the prime minister's office and suffered major losses with the devaluation of the CFA franc in January 1994. The prime minister, Habib Thiam, was reported to have tried to have the proceeds from the privatisation of SONATEL credited to the FPE, while Mr Sakho succeeded in applying them to a range of budgetary needs. Mr Sakho was less successful in gaining control over the utilisation of the income from a fishing agreement signed with the European Union in March 1997. Under the terms of the accord, half of the CFAfr32bn (\$54m) paid by the EU was to be devoted specifically to development of Senegal's fishing industry. Mr Sakho argued that this CFAfr16bn should be managed through a special account within the Treasury, but the sum was allocated instead to the fishing ministry, with Mr Thiam's evident blessing. This was reported to have been the final conflict that precipitated Mr Sakho's decision to resign, amid several other policy differences, including the future status of Dakar's industrial free zone.

—as a new ESAF is agreed

The cabinet shift came at a sensitive time, as the government was in the middle of negotiating a third enhanced structural adjustment facility (ESAF) with the IMF, to cover 1998-2000. Asked to comment on Mr Sakho's replacement by Mamadou Lamine Loum, the World Bank resident representative in Dakar, Cadman Atta Mills, expressed sadness over Mr Sakho's departure but felt that with Mr Loum at the helm, "macroeconomic rigour will be maintained". On

February 20th it was announced that the Senegalese authorities had signed a new ESAF worth CFAfr85bn (\$141m) with the IMF mission that visited the country on February 2nd-18th. At the time of writing, the agreement had yet to be approved by the IMF board, but this should only be a formality, since the Fund has been full of praise for Senegal's recent economic performance and efforts to place its financial management on a sounder footing.

The economy

Government and IMF 1997
growth and inflation
figures are close

In tabling the 1997 budget bill before parliament, the then finance minister, Papa Ousmane Sakho, reported that Senegal's GDP is estimated to have grown by 5.6% in 1997, down from the initial target of 6%, largely because of lower than expected growth in agricultural output. This revised figure, however, was significantly higher than the IMF's mid-year projection of 4.8%. Whatever the final tally, it will still mark the fourth year in a row of growth in income per head. Initial government projections for 1998 suggest a slowing in the growth rate, to 4.5%, reflecting the continued impact of the poor agricultural performance in the crop year 1997/98. The IMF had earlier projected that the inflation rate in 1997 would range between 2% and 3%, but the government says that it came down to 1.9% in 1997, compared with 2.5% in 1996 and 8% the year before. The 1.9% figure refers to the "African basket" of consumer prices, covering the vast bulk of the population, while the inflation rate for the "European basket", which includes more imported goods, stood at 2.5% in 1997. The IMF's latest estimates, released after the signing of the new three-year enhanced structural adjustment facility (ESAF), are closer to the government's own figures, indicating 5.2% growth in GDP and a 1.8% inflation rate in 1997.

Tourism sets a new record

Provisional estimates by the Ministry for Tourism and Air Transport report that 400,000 tourists entered the country in 1997, with hotel overnight stays at 1.3m, record figures for Senegal. The sector brought in an estimated CFAfr80bn (\$136m). According to the ministry, these results reflected assistance programmes for independent tour operators, the promotion of sports such as fishing and golf, the development of tourism in the north, and a targeting of the Spanish and Italian tourist markets. The main tourist sites in Casamance are some distance from the areas of conflict, but it is likely that the resurgence of fighting since August had some dampening effect on tourism at the end of 1997.

Agriculture

The cereal deficit will
grow—

The poor rains of October and November in Senegal's central and northern regions have severely set back the 1997/98 agricultural season. As of mid-January the Ministry of Agriculture was projecting a total cereal harvest of just 780,000 tonnes, significantly down from the 976,000 tonnes harvested the previous year and far below the initial target of 1.3m tonnes when Mr Diouf first proclaimed 1997 the "Year of Agriculture". The overall cereal deficit is expected to reach about 650,000 tonnes, some 20% higher than at the close of the previous season. The output of the main staple cereals, millet and sorghum, will be down 29% and 12%, respectively, while maize production is expected to

decline by 34% and fonio by 43%. Only rice, which has benefited from significant investments in irrigation and other inputs, has done well, with production projected to reach 174,000 tonnes, less than the initial target of 200,000 tonnes, but still 16.8% above the 1996/97 crop. Many rice farmers, however, appear to be having difficulties selling their early crops, since the markets have been inundated with 600,000 tonnes of cheaper imported Indian rice.

—and emergency measures are set in train

While part of the cereal gap will likely be covered by increased commercial imports, the government is preparing an international appeal for 82,000 tonnes of emergency assistance. Canada and the UN's World Food Programme, frequent sources of food relief for Senegal, have already been alerted. The government has allocated CFAfr3bn (\$5m) to the Commissariat à la sécurité alimentaire to provide immediate assistance to farmers in the worst-stricken areas.

Industry

\$55m in prospecting investments are expected by 2000

According to a report issued in September by the mines ministry, a minimum of \$55m in investment in mineral prospecting is expected between now and 2000, judging from the number of permits that have been issued for gold, phosphate, iron ore and other exploration projects in the mineral-rich region of Tambacounda. This could bring 1,500 jobs annually, the report estimated.

The ICS phosphate complex records its best year ever

The integrated mining-industrial company, Industries chimiques du Sénégal (ICS), broke all its previous records in 1997, reaching a turnover of CFAfr110bn (\$185m) and net profits of CFAfr18bn. The production of phosphate reached 1.5m tonnes in 1997, 7% higher than in 1996. While the output of phosphoric acid remained stable at 300,000 tonnes, but phosphate fertiliser production reached a record 225,000 tonnes. These results put ICS in a good position to follow through on its ambitious investment plans, which include doubling its annual phosphoric acid production capacity to 640,000 tonnes by 2000 and opening a second phosphate mine at Tobène two years later. Total projected investment will range between CFAfr150bn and CFAfr175bn, of which nearly half will come from the ICS's own resources.

Foreign trade, aid and payments

The World Bank approves a \$560m aid programme with Senegal

On January 30th the World Bank agreed to a three-year \$560m programme to help in "deepening the reform programme, unshackling the private sector, and addressing the serious issues of poverty incidence and unemployment". The programme will support 14 projects in the health, education, agriculture, transport and water sectors, as well as adjustment lending for energy and trade liberalisation. It was also noted that the Senegalese social and economic indicators have started to improve and that the management of the World Bank's portfolio of ongoing projects has also registered a strong improvement.

The port of Dakar hopes to become a regional trading hub

With the establishment of a common tariff by 2000 among the eight member-states of the Union économique et monétaire ouest-africaine (UEMOA), officials of the Port autonome de Dakar (PAD) have worried that its cumbersome

customs and port regulations may discourage traders and lead to a diversion of freight to competing ports in the region. In November the PAD administrative council set out an ambitious programme for between CFAfr30bn (\$51m) and CFAfr40bn in investments over 1998-2002 to modernise and expand the port's facilities, as well as to streamline its customs and administrative procedures. In addition to the construction of new warehouses for a possible free-port zone, improved road and rail connections to the port are also under study with the aim of enhancing its attractiveness as a transit hub. Just a few weeks earlier, Senegal signed an agreement with Taiwan permitting a fleet of 200 Taiwanese tuna vessels to use the port of Dakar as their base for fishing the Atlantic.

Mr Jospin reinforces
France's ties—

In his first visit to a Sub-Saharan country since becoming French prime minister, Lionel Jospin, stopped off in Dakar on December 19th, with much official fanfare. During the visit Mr Jospin highlighted not only France's longstanding relations with one of its oldest former colonies, but also his own Socialist Party's close political relations with President Abdou Diouf's Parti Socialiste (PS) as well as his personal friendship (from student days) with the prime minister, Habib Thiam. With the French co-operation minister, Charles Josselin, in tow, a number of new aid agreements were signed: CFAfr2.2bn (\$3.7m) for fishing wharves, CFAfr600m for organising artisanal fishing, and CFAfr1.7bn to aid administrative decentralisation. In the weeks preceding the visit, French military co-operation dominated attention, however. Paris said that it would reduce by 150 its contingent of 1,200 troops in Senegal, but then followed by announcing that it would open four new regional military training schools in Africa, one of them in Thiès. France also agreed to provide more than 900 troops to take part in the first regional African peacekeeping exercise, comprising troops mainly from Senegal, Mali and Mauritania, scheduled for February 20th-March 6th.

—and Japan pledges to
maintain its aid levels

As Senegal's second-largest bilateral donor, after France, Japan's announcement that it is planning to reduce its 1998 external aid programme by 10% overall brought some anxiety to Senegalese officials. But in an interview in January, Japan's ambassador in Dakar, Etsuo Ito, assured his hosts that Japan considers Senegal a "priority nation" and would try to maintain its current level of development assistance (which stood at \$73m in 1995). Lending some credence to Mr Ito's assurances, in a series of separate aid agreements over November to January, Japan agreed to provide CFAfr3.6bn (\$6m) for the modernisation of Dakar's central fish market, CFAfr1.9bn in food aid, CFAfr7.5bn in adjustment support, CFAfr3bn for building 490 new classrooms and CFAfr2.2bn for irrigation projects.

Other aid news

Additional aid agreements this quarter include the following:

- a concessional loan of CFAfr4bn (\$6.7m) from the Nordic Development Fund for the government's integrated health programme;
- from Belgium, CFAfr2bn in aid to primary health care in Diourbel;
- from Canada, CFAfr6bn for education, "good governance", and local capacity-building; and
- a concessional loan of \$8m from the World Bank, as the main financing for a \$10.4m project to support agricultural exporters.

The Gambia

Political structure

Official name	The Republic of The Gambia	
Form of state	Unitary republic	
Legal system	Based on English common law and the 1996 constitution	
National legislature	House of Assembly: installed on January 16th 1997 following its suspension after the military coup of July 1994; 49 members, 45 elected by universal suffrage, four nominated by the president; all serve a five-year term	
National elections	September 1996 (presidential), January 1997 (legislative); next elections due September 2001 (presidential) and January 2002 (legislative)	
Head of state	President, elected by universal suffrage for a five-year term	
National government	The president and cabinet	
Main political parties	The ban on political activity was lifted in August 1996, but three pre-coup parties (the People's Progressive Party, the Gambia People's Party and the National Convention Party) remain proscribed. The ruling party is the Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC); the United Democratic Party (UDP) and the National Reconciliation Party (NRP) are the main opposition parties	
Key ministers	President & minister for defence	Yahyah Jammeh
	Vice-president & minister for health, social welfare & women's affairs	Isatou Njie Saidy
	Agriculture	Musa Mbenga
	Civil service	Mustapha Wadda
	Culture & tourism	Susan Waffa-Ogoo
	Education	Satang Jow
	External affairs	Lamine Sedat Jobe
	Finance & economic affairs	Dominic Mendy
	Interior	Momodou Bojang
	Justice & attorney-general	Hawa Sisay Sabally
	Local government & lands	Yankuba Touray
	Presidential affairs, national assembly, civil service, fisheries & natural resources	Edward Singhateh
	Public works, communications & information	Ebrihima Ceesay
Trade, industry & employment	Famara Jatta	
Youth, sports & religious affairs	Lamin Kaba Bajo	
Central Bank governor	Clarke Bajo	

Economic structure

Latest available figures

Economic indicators	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997 ^a
GDP at market prices ^b (D m)	3,229	3,411	3,439	3,725	3,922
Real GDP growth ^b (%)	1.8	1.3	-4.0	3.1	2.1
Consumer price inflation (%)	6.5	1.7	7.0	1.1	2.9 ^c
Population ('000)	1,026	1,080	1,120	1,211 ^c	1,309 ^c
Exports fob ^b (\$ m)	157.0	125.0	123.0	118.8	111.3
Imports fob ^b (\$ m)	214.5	181.6	162.5	217.1	185.3
Current account ^b (\$ m)	-5.3	8.2	-8.2	-47.7	-28.8
Reserves excl gold (\$ m)	102.2 ^d	98.0	106.2	102.1	99.4 ^e
Total external debt (\$ m)	425.4	421.3	425.6	n/a	n/a
External debt-service ratio (%)	11.7	14.4	14.0	n/a	n/a
Groundnut production ^b ('000 tonnes)	67.0	65.4	79.7	78.8	68.1
Charter tourists ^b ('000)	63.9	90.0	42.9	72.1	75.9
Exchange rate (av; D:\$)	9.13	9.58	9.55	9.78	10.2

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Origins of gross domestic product 1997 ^{ab}	% of total	Components of gross domestic product 1997 ^{ab}	% of total
Agriculture	23	Private consumption	77
Industry	13	Government consumption	17
Services	64	Gross domestic investment	20
GDP at factor cost	100	Exports of goods & services	46
		Imports of goods & services	-60
		GDP at market prices	100

Principal exports 1993 ^b	\$ m	Principal imports 1993 ^b	\$ m
Fish & fish preparations	2.7	Food	77.5
Groundnuts (shelled)	1.5	Machinery & transport equipment	61.7
		Manufactures	52.7
		Minerals & fuel	15.7

Main destinations of exports 1996 ^f	% of total	Main origins of imports 1996 ^f	% of total
Japan	29.2	China	20.3
Senegal	10.8	Côte d'Ivoire	13.9
Hong Kong	9.2	Hong Kong	9.8
France	7.7	UK	7.6

^a IMF estimates. ^b Fiscal year ending June 30th. ^c EIU estimate. ^d End-September. ^e June actual. ^f Derived from partners' trade returns, subject to a wide margin of error.

Outlook for 1998-99

A more confident leader begins to seek an international role—

In the three and a half years since, at the age of 29, he led a coup against the previous government, eventually legitimising his position by changing the constitution and winning a presidential election, Colonel Yahyah Jammeh has weathered a barrage of international criticism and some internal resistance. The country is now peaceful, tourists are returning in numbers to the holiday beaches, and the latest flickerings of opposition within the army have been damped down firmly. The regime has gained momentous international recognition, with The Gambia taking its seat as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for a two-year term. President Jammeh is beginning to look secure and is manifestly enjoying his growing international role. He is the current chairman of an important subregional organisation, the Inter-state Committee on Drought in the Sahel, and has recently enhanced relations with countries such as Libya, Iran, Cuba, Nigeria and Egypt. He has offered to mediate between the government of Senegal and the rebels of the Mouvement des forces démocratiques de Casamance (MFDC), who took arms in 1982 to fight for the independence of the Senegalese southern region of Casamance. The Senegalese authorities have welcomed the Gambian president's offer of mediation and it looks like he may pull off a success which will win him kudos with The Gambia's all-important neighbour.

—as aid funds start to flow again—

Pending serious progress with the IMF towards an enhanced structural adjustment facility (ESAF), which is what The Gambia's economy really needs, other major institutional donors are coming forward with substantial development packages. They are led by the African Development Bank (ADB), which is reported to be about to make further funding of some \$13m available, in addition to the \$14m in aid already agreed in late 1997. The new money will be in loans for health services and poverty-reduction measures, and will include a \$5m package to help the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs implement a structural adjustment programme. The ADB is also to put some \$1.3m into a feasibility study for a coastal protection project. Together with the hospitals and schools building programmes, and a major road-building scheme announced in recent months, these projects will have a major impact on the government's ability to create modern sector jobs in the coming year and beyond, provided other donors and institutional lenders now come forward.

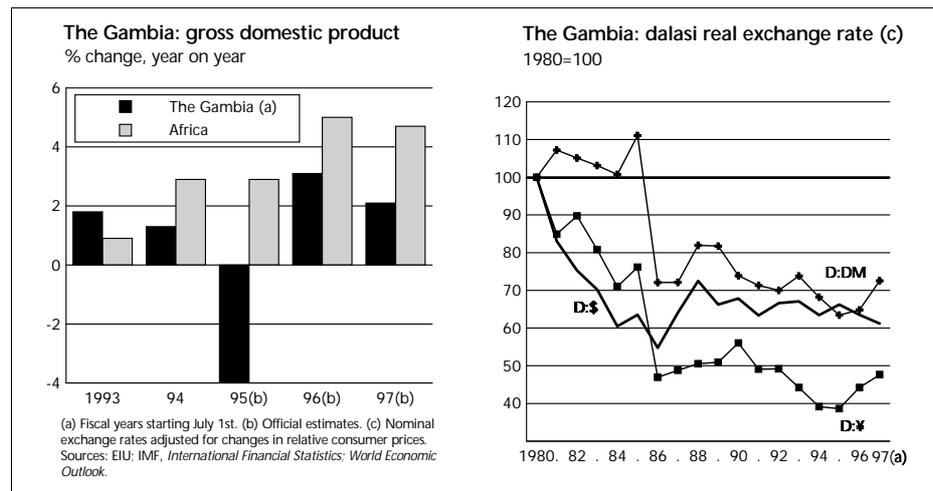
—helping recovery in key sectors—

Thanks to the more peaceful state of the country now, tourism, formerly the most important single source of foreign exchange, has been enjoying a good season (November-May) and is gradually returning to pre-coup levels of activity. The government estimates a 5% real growth in the service and infrastructure sectors in fiscal year 1997/98 (July-June), partly thanks to improved tourism prospects, partly also because of the government's determination to press ahead with its roads, port, and airport development projects.

—but the economy remains highly vulnerable

Given the return to healthier levels of international aid, and the prospect of a more relaxed relationship with Senegal, enabling the re-export traffic to return to normal levels, the government's current, fairly modest, GDP growth target of 3.2% should be attainable in 1998. But the economy remains vulnerable.

Any return to instability, in the form of trouble in the armed forces, or social discontent could upset the improving picture in the tourist industry, and also discourage donors. The main weakness, aside from a substantial financing gap which is expected to mark the 1998/99 budget, is in the agricultural sector. As in other countries in this part of the Sahel zone, patchy rains, have left agriculture in a weak position, with poor cereal and groundnut harvests, for the third year running in the case of groundnuts. Sir Dawda Jawara's government, ousted in 1994, sought for years to persuade farmers to diversify into growing cash crops of flowers, fruit and vegetables for the European markets, but with little real success. Colonel Jammeh's government has yet to address the backwardness of agriculture by launching an extensive set of reforms and incentives, as planned in its long-term development policy document *Vision 2020*.



Review

The political scene

The Gambian president offers to mediate in the Casamance conflict—

In a New Year's speech the president, Colonel Yahyah Jammeh, offered to mediate between the authorities in neighbouring Senegal and rebels in that country's province of Casamance. The rebels of the Mouvement des forces démocratiques de Casamance (MFDC) have been fighting for Casamance's independence for 15 years. The ongoing peace negotiations between the Senegalese authorities and the different factions of the MFDC reached a new stalemate in mid-1997, when armed clashes flared up after 18 months of relative calm. Several hundred people are reported to have died since the resumption of the hostilities. Colonel Jammeh described the rebellion as a threat to the security of West Africa and to the subregion's socio-economic development and called on other leaders to join him in a mediation effort.

—which Senegalese authorities appear to welcome—

The Senegalese ambassador to The Gambia, Madieng Khary Dieng, said on January 2nd that the initiative stood a good chance of success. The Gambian leader is from the Diola tribe, a minority community in The Gambia, but from

- which most Casamance rebels are drawn. The conflict has hitherto been treated by African governments as an internal Senegalese matter. Nonetheless, in early December the US State Department expressed concern about intensification of the fighting, calling for immediate peace talks, after the Senegalese army launched a new offensive against the rebels. In a separate move, the government of Guinea-Bissau began to crack down on MFDC rebel activities on its side of the border in January.
- as refugees seek safety in
Gambian villages—
- The Gambia, which borders the Casamance region, is now shouldering the burden of war refugees. Several hundred Casamançais civilians were reported to have sought refuge in villages across the border during the final weeks of 1997. According to the Banjul newspaper, the *Daily Observer*, MFDC rebels, who escaped from a battle in northern Casamance in early January, were among the refugees. Survivors said that their villages had been overrun by rival MFDC factions. One group said that their village headman had been tortured to death by rebels. They hoped to be allowed to remain in The Gambia.
- The president appeals for
a new era of partnership—
- President Jammeh met the heads of diplomatic missions in The Gambia's capital, Banjul, on January 8th, appealing for "a new era of genuine partnership and co-operation". He drew their attention to the government's long-term development policy document, *Vision 2020*, which was adopted in early 1997 (1st quarter 1997, page 28) and aims at eradicating poverty, hunger, disease, ignorance and insecurity. Calling on the country's international partners to help achieve these objectives, he promised, in return, that The Gambia would honour its obligations to countries and international organisations.
- and invites his ousted
predecessor to return—
- In a similarly conciliatory vein, the president called on all Gambians in exile to return home and to join in the task of nation-building. He extended the invitation to the former president, Sir Dawda Jawara, whom he overthrew in 1994. Sir Dawda now lives in the UK. Colonel Jammeh was quoted as saying "Jawara can return as a private citizen, but I cannot guarantee his security in the country". The former president has repeatedly condemned Colonel Jammeh's coup, and political observers considered it highly unlikely that he would take up the offer.
- while sacking the
minister of foreign affairs
- On January 19th Colonel Jammeh appointed Lamine Sedat Jobe, a Gambian official with the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), as minister of external affairs, replacing Omar Njie. Mr Njie had been in the cabinet since March 1997, when Colonel Jammeh announced the composition of the current government—the first one to be formed under The Gambia's new democratic constitution adopted by referendum on August 7th 1996. No reason was given for the move.
- Officials deny that
Mobutu's gold is in
Gambian vaults—
- In November, a report on the German television channel, *Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (ZDF)*, alleged that The Gambia was holding \$90m worth of gold belonging to the late Mobutu Sese Seko, the president of the former Zaire (now renamed the Democratic Republic of Congo, DRC) who was overthrown by Laurent Kabila in May 1997. According to the report, 6 tonnes of Mobutu's gold were hidden in containers in different locations in The Gambia. A government

statement, issued jointly with the Central Bank of The Gambia on November 13th, rejected the ZDF allegations, saying that they were “without foundation” and that there was no proof of the gold’s presence in the country. The government requested anyone who knew anything of its whereabouts to contact the authorities. According to the German station, Mobutu’s son, Kongolo Mobutu, had been in charge of shipping consignments of gold to The Gambia since 1994, and that it was held there, to be shipped out in monthly consignments of 80-100 kg, via German and Swiss intermediaries.

—but the Congolese authorities launch an investigation

The Congolese authorities were, however, swift to react. In an interview given on the French radio, Radio France Internationale, on November 14th, the Congolese justice minister, Celestin Luangi, said that the DRC government was planning to contact the relevant authorities in The Gambia to try to locate the gold and those holding it, before initiating proceedings for its seizure and retrieval. The French news agency, Agence France Presse, quoted the Congolese justice minister as saying that the Gambian authorities were to be asked to extradite anyone involved in the alleged shipments. The Mobutu family, living in exile in Rabat, Morocco, where the late ruler died in September 1997, claim to know nothing of the alleged deposits in The Gambia.

A national security commission is established

A national security commission was formally established on January 6th. Its main task will be to stamp out The Gambia’s illicit arms traffic. The 15-member commission is headed by a woman, Isatou Njie Saïdy, and includes the interior minister, Momodou Bojang, and the armed forces chief of staff, Bubacar Jatta, as well as the director of the national security agency and the chief of police. The commission will also run a national information campaign aimed at encouraging Gambians to respect the law.

A Ghanaian journalist is deported—

It was reported on November 2nd that a Ghanaian journalist, Muhamed Ellicot Seade, editor of *The Daily Observer*, a popular Gambian newspaper, had been deported. No reason was given. Mr Seade, who had been working in the country for two years, was the fifth journalist on the paper to be expelled in recent months. Kenneth Best, the Sierra Leonean owner of the newspaper, had already been deported. Two journalists on the paper were arrested for suspected anti-government activities early in 1996 (2nd quarter 1996, page 22).

—and a popular local radio is closed down—

A popular privately owned local radio station, Citizen FM, was reported on February 10th to have gone off the air, five days after security men arrested its proprietor, Baboucar Gaye, and the station’s news editor, Ebrima Sillah. According to a Toronto-based non-governmental organisation, the International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX), the two were arrested after Citizen FM alleged that the National Intelligence Agency’s director of operations had been sacked in connection with a counterfeiting scandal. In an official statement, the Gambian government claimed that the closure of Citizen FM was partly because of its owners’ failure to pay licence fees. In January this year the government decided to raise the licence fee for private radio broadcasters from D12,000 (\$1,200) to D25,000, thus threatening the commercial viability of private radios in The Gambia.

- prompting a complaint from Article 19
- The London-based human rights organisation Article 19 issued a report on February 20th, strongly criticising the government's record on human rights and press freedom, and attacking the closure of Citizen FM. The move "raises further questions about the Gambian government's commitment to encouraging media pluralism", the organisation said. It accused the government of restricting, harassing and torturing opposition activists, and of forcing some foreign journalists to flee the country. Article 19 also criticised the Commonwealth for failing to do more to ensure that human rights were upheld in The Gambia.
- A media agreement is signed with Iran
- In late November the public works, communications and information minister, Ebrihima Ceesay, signed a co-operation agreement in Tehran with the Iranian broadcasting company, the Voice and Vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran (VVIRI). Gambian technicians will be sent to Iran to undertake training in communications, while Iranian technicians will come to The Gambia to train local radio and television staff. The two countries will also exchange programmes and news.
- Colonel Jammeh wants the OAU African human rights charter updated—
- The president called for a revision of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) charter of human rights when he addressed the annual meeting of its African Commission on Human Rights, held in The Gambia's capital, Banjul, on November 3rd. The commission, which has its headquarters in Banjul, was formed in 1987. The president said that it was time to look again at the provision of the charter which gave the final say on allegations of human rights violations to the heads of state. Also on the agenda was Burundi's request for a hearing, contending that the sanctions imposed on Burundi by neighbouring states since Pierre Buyoya's coup in July 1996 were illegal.
- and The Gambia takes its seat on the UN Security Council
- The Gambia became a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council on January 2nd. Of the 10 non-permanent members of the 15-member council, 5 are appointed each year for a two-year term. The Gambia has never had a council seat before. The US ambassador to the UN, Bill Richardson, who paid a visit to President Jammeh in Banjul in early February, announced that The Gambia had given its backing, as a Council member, to Washington's threat of military action against Iraq. Mr Richardson was quoted as saying that the Gambian leader shared the US view that the actions of the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, in denying access to UN weapons inspectors were illegal "and that all options, including military strikes, were on the table".
- The president pays his first official visit to Paris
- At the end of February President Jammeh paid his first official visit to France, where he met the French president, Jacques Chirac, and the foreign affairs minister, Hubert Védrine. A technical, cultural and scientific agreement was signed, with a view to re-inforcing co-operation between the two countries.

The economy

Cereal production falls far short of expectations

In common with Niger, Senegal, Cape Verde, and Mauritania, The Gambia suffered a serious cereal crop shortfall in 1997, which could cause some hardship in the coming months. An emergency meeting of the Comité inter-états de lutte contre la sécheresse au Sahel (CILSS), held in Paris on November 27th and 28th, announced that the nine Sahel member countries had a combined deficit of 700,000 tonnes last season. Uneven rainfall was the main problem. The Gambia's total production of 85,000 tonnes of rice and other cereals was the lowest for many years, and preliminary forecasts for 1998 indicate poor harvests in its western areas this year.

The Gambia: cereal production
('000 tonnes)

1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997 ^a
128	102	91	103	112	85

^a Official estimate.

Sources: UN Food and Agriculture Organisation: CILSS.

Sesame growers are smiling

The official producer price of sesame seed was raised from \$350 to \$450 per tonne with effect from January. The Gambia produced 800 tonnes of sesame seed in 1997, according to the Paris journal *Marchés Tropicaux et Méditerranéens*. The Gambia's farmers have been slow to respond to repeated government calls over recent years to diversify out of groundnut growing into alternative small-scale cash crops, but the higher price on offer for sesame seed should serve as a stimulus.

Led by ADB loans, development funds are again flowing strongly—

Although the government is still worried about a financing gap for 1998 (4th quarter 1997, page 27), The Gambia has again been enjoying a relatively strong inflow of multilateral aid money in recent months, following a calming of the general political situation and improved relations with donors. The Abidjan-based African Development Bank (ADB) approved a \$9.5m loan to The Gambia on December 11th for the development of health services. Bank officials said that the funds were to be used for a project to improve access to primary and secondary healthcare and increasing the supply of equipment for support services. The project also includes training of health personnel and the formation of medical teams. The bank announced a further loan on December 12th of \$4.4m to finance a poverty reduction programme. Since it began in 1974, total ADB funding for projects and programmes in The Gambia has reached \$206.2m.

—while the OPEC Fund contributes to education—

The Vienna-based OPEC Fund for International Development signed a \$1.5m loan agreement with the government on November 4th to help construct two new middle schools near Banjul. An OPEC press release said that the project is part of the government's efforts to accommodate 30,000 students by 2003. Of an estimated 43 new schools needed under the current programme, 26 have either been completed or are under construction, according to the OPEC Fund.

—and finance for new hospitals comes from the Islamic Bank

A \$6m credit from the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) was announced on November 5th to finance the construction of two hospitals. The credit is also intended for the purchase of medical equipment. It is repayable over 30 years, with a ten-year grace period, and brings total IDB lending to The Gambia to \$43m. The IDB lends to member states of the Islamic Conference Organisation.

Trust Bank takes over Meridien BIAO

The Trust Bank of The Gambia, in which the government is majority shareholder, is reported to have taken over a state-owned bank, the Meridien Bank, formerly the Gambian branch of the collapsed Banque Internationale pour l'Afrique Occidentale. The transfer of ownership was formally completed in October 1997, and it is understood that, under a general reorganisation being carried out by the Central Bank of the Gambia, Trust Bank will eventually be privatised.

Mauritania

Political structure

Official name	République Islamique de Mauritanie	
Form of state	Arab and African Islamic republic	
Legal system	Strongly influenced by the <i>sharia</i> (Islamic law), based on the 1991 constitution	
National legislature	Bicameral National Assembly, consists of an upper house with 56 senators and a lower house with 79 deputies	
National elections	October 1996 (legislative); December 1997 (presidential); next elections due in October 2001 (legislative) and December 2003 (presidential)	
Head of state	President, elected for a renewable six-year term; currently Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya, re-elected in December 1997	
National government	The president and his appointed Council of Ministers; last major reshuffle January 1998	
Main political parties	21 political parties are registered, the foremost of which are: Parti républicain démocratique et social (PRDS, ruling party); Action pour le changement (AC); Rassemblement pour la démocratie et l'unité (RDU); Union des forces démocratiques (UFD); Union pour la démocratie et le progrès (UDP)	
Key ministers	President	Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya
	Prime minister	Mohamed Lemine Ould Guig
	Civil service, labour, youth & sports	Baba Ould Sidi
	Culture & Islamic affairs	Khattry Ould Jiddou
	Defence	Kaba Ould Elewa
	Education	Ahmedou Ould Moustapha Ould Senhoury
	Equipment & transport	Sghair Ould M'Bareck
	Finance	Camara Aly Gueladio
	Fisheries & the maritime economy	Abdesselam Ould Mohamed Saleh
	Foreign affairs & co-operation	Mohamed El Hacen Ould Lebatt
	Health & social affairs	Ba Diyé
	Information & relations with parliament	Rachid Ould Saleh
	Justice	Mohamed Lemine Ould Ahmed
	Interior, posts & telecommunications	Colonel Ahmed Ould Minnih
	Mines & industry	N'Gaidé Lamine Kayo
	Planning	Sid'El Moctar Ould Nagi
Rural development & environment	Abderahmane Ould Hamma Vezzaz	
Trade, crafts & tourism	Sidi Mohamed Ould Mohamed Vall	
Water & energy	Mohamed Salem Ould Merzoug	
Central Bank governor	Mahjoudh Ould Mohamed Ali	

Economic structure

Latest available figures

Economic indicators	1993	1994	1995	1996 ^a	1997 ^a
GDP at market prices (UM bn)	116.2	124.9	138.6	151.8	166.1
Real GDP growth (%)	5.5	4.6	4.6 ^b	4.9	4.9
Consumer price inflation (%)	9.3	4.1 ^b	6.5 ^b	4.6	5.5
Population (m)	2.16	2.21	2.28	2.35	2.42
Exports fob (\$ m) ^a	392	401	473	472	460
Imports fob (\$ m) ^a	440	430	494	453	440
Current account (\$ m) ^a	-89	-50	12	27	29
Reserves excl gold (\$ m)	44.6	39.7	85.5	141.2 ^c	200.8 ^c
Total external debt (\$ m)	2,174	2,329	2,467	2,351	2,365
External debt-service ratio (%)	30.1	24.4	21.5	19.6	17.2
Iron-ore exports ('000 tonnes)	9,737	10,342	11,514	11,158	11,145
Fisheries output ('000 tonnes)	313	196	287	366	220
Exchange rate (av; UM:\$)	120.8	123.6	129.8	137.3 ^c	151.7 ^c

February 27th 1998 UM172.08:\$1

Origins of gross domestic product 1996	% of total	Components of gross domestic product 1996	% of total
Agriculture & fishing	29.1	Private consumption	78.4
Mining	12.3	Public consumption	9.5
Manufacturing	3.8	Gross fixed investment	16.3
Services	33.5	Exports of goods & services	42.0
GDP at factor cost incl others	100.0	Imports of goods & services	-46.2
		GDP at market prices	100.0

Principal exports 1996	\$ m	Principal imports 1996	\$ m
Fish & fish products	267.0	Energy & mineral products	129.0
Iron ore	216.0	Food & agricultural products	116.0
Gold & gypsum	2.0	Machinery & equipment	67.0
		Consumer goods	22.0

Main destinations of exports 1996	% of total	Main origins of imports 1996	% of total
Japan	21.8	France	29.2
Italy	16.1	Algeria	9.9
France	13.9	Spain	6.9
Spain	9.1	China	6.5

^a Central bank estimates. ^b IMF estimate. ^c Actual.

Outlook for 1998-99

Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya will stay in office for another six years—

Following a sweeping victory in the presidential election on December 12th, Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya, who first took power in a 1984 military coup and won the 1992 presidential election with over 62% of the vote, can look forward to another six-year term. There was never any real doubt that Mr Ould Taya would win. But the results came close to the limits of credibility, with Mr Ould Taya receiving more than 90% of the votes. As expected, the opposition rejected the results, contending that the election was fraudulent and accusing the ruling Parti républicain démocratique et social (PRDS) and its allies of having manipulated the polls by all sorts of electoral malpractice. But few protests are expected from anywhere else and neutral observers, despite pointing at some irregularities, seem to be satisfied with the conduct of the polling. The French president, Jacques Chirac, was one of the first to congratulate the victor on his “convincing” re-election.

—while the new government will be dogged by instability—

As is customary, the cabinet resigned en-bloc at the announcement of the election result. The former prime minister, Cheikh El Avia Ould Mohamed Khouna, had headed a less than united team, with nine cabinet changes in less than two years, and was not expected to retain his job. Although several names had been touted for the post, the appointment of Mohamed Lemine Ould Guig as prime minister came as a surprise to many observers. The relatively unknown 47-year-old law professor finds himself at the head of a 22-member cabinet, which includes ten youthful newcomers with academic and civil service backgrounds. He quickly succumbed to the “Khouna syndrome” with two cabinet reshuffles being announced in the first two months. The two ministers unceremoniously sacked in the first change lost their jobs for “major offences” in the management of their departments.

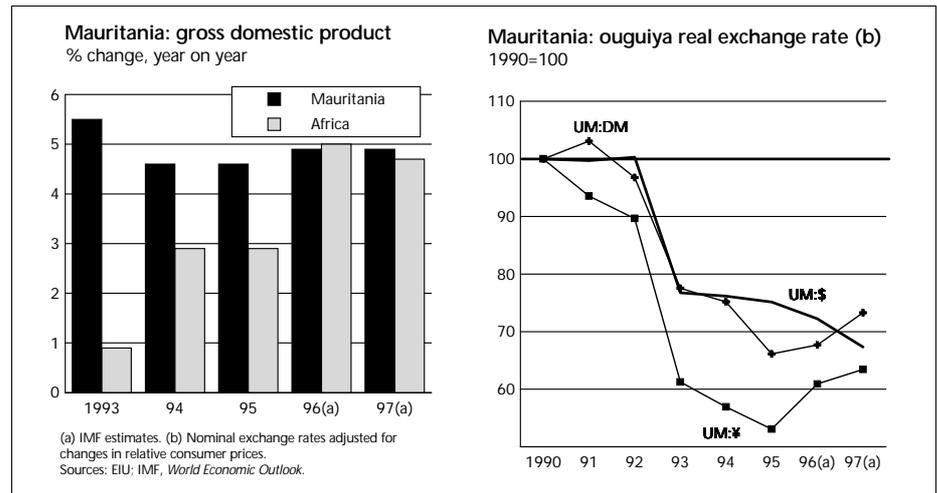
—against a backdrop of continued civil rights violation

Less encouraging is the appointment of Colonel Ahmed Ould Minnih as minister of the interior. He occupied this post in previous administrations, and always at times of heightened tension, such as in 1988, when difficulties between his country and Senegal came to a head with the flight of thousands of black Mauritians to Senegal. His department has already cracked down hard on human rights associations and the free press. Four leaders of the anti-slavery movement and opposition Action pour le changement were sentenced to 13 months in prison for “spreading lies” about Mauritania, having claimed, in a French television broadcast, that slavery persisted in the country. This attitude has already won Mauritania an avalanche of protests from various associations, and a diplomatic rebuke from Washington.

GDP growth will be sustained, but there are worries

Mauritanian economy is on track for 5% growth in GDP in 1998, much the same rate as in the past two years. The government predicts a balanced budget for the year, as was achieved in 1997 when a slight surplus emerged, and a continued strengthening in the overall balance of payments. Indeed, Mauritania's external position has improved considerably in the past 12 months, with foreign reserves of over \$200m now representing almost five months' coverage of imports. There is a counterbalance, however. Much of the improvement is because of debt rescheduling and an inflow of funds from

Europe and other donor agencies. Mauritania is finding it difficult to digest this windfall. The money supply, after three years of shrinkage, owing in large part to the introduction of Treasury bonds, has resumed expansion and the depreciation of the currency is pushing up the price of imported goods. The ouguiya fell by over 15% against the dollar during 1997, but by considerably less against the currencies of the country's major trading partners, Japan and Europe. Meanwhile, nearly every Mauritanian trader is convinced the ouguiya will be devalued in early 1998 and has been busily stocking up on imported goods, which could push the merchandise trade account into deficit this year. Also worrying is the potential impact of the Asian currency crisis, notably on inflows of aid and investment funds from Japan and its demand for Mauritanian goods.



Review

The political scene

After campaigning in earnest—

Despite the absence of any real opposition, the incumbent president, Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya, ran a vigorous two-week campaign for the presidential election on December 12th. He visited most parts of the country, paying particular attention to opposition strongholds in the south where he received assurances of support from local notables. Opposition claims that its boycott would be "well respected" by the electorate were somewhat dented by the massive turnouts granted to the president during meetings in the southern parts of the country. Mr Ould Taya stressed that his government had responded to several opposition requests by introducing various measures to prevent electoral fraud, such as the suppression of the mobile polling stations originally designed for the nomadic population. He noted that foreign observers would be present to ensure the smooth running of the election. He described opposition statements that slavery persisted in Mauritania as "unworthy and false", adding that slavery had been abolished in the country in 1980 and that the authorities were doing all they could to stamp out vestiges of the centuries-old practice.

—Mr Ould Taya is re-elected for a further six-year term—

Mr Ould Taya celebrated his 15th anniversary as the president of Mauritania with a sweeping victory in the presidential election. As widely expected, the main opposition parties, grouped under the umbrella of the Front des partis de l'opposition (FPO), boycotted the exercise and the 54-year-old president was convincingly re-elected at the first count to a further six-year term of office. He faced little real opposition and received more than 90% of the valid votes cast. Although five other candidates initially put themselves forward for the presidency, Mr Ould Taya, backed by a constellation of pro-presidential parties, including the Parti républicain démocratique et social (PRDS), the Rassemblement pour la démocratie et l'unité (RDU) and the "moderate" wing of the Union pour la démocratie et le progrès (UDP), faced four opponents on the election day. The fifth candidate, Tidjane Koita, the mayor of the southern town of Kaédi and a dissident member of the opposition Action pour le changement (AC), decided not to contest the election saying that "the time [was] not ripe to take part". Mr Koita was suspended from the AC last August for his "over-enthusiastic" welcome of a PRDS delegation (4th quarter 1997, page 35) and had since created his own political party, the Union nationale pour la démocratie et le développement (UPDD).

Mauritania: presidential election results, Dec 12th 1997

	No. of votes	% of valid votes
Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya	801,190	90.25
Mohamed Lemine Ch'bih Ould Cheikh Melainine	61,869	6.97
Moulaye El-Hacen Ould Jiyed	8,165	0.92
Mohamed Mahmoud Ould Mah	6,443	0.72
Kane Amadou Moctar	3,342	0.38
Valid votes cast	887,762	-
Votes cast	900,200	-
Registered voters	1,203,357	-

—while only one other contender winning more than 6% of the vote

The other candidates were: the leader of the newly created Front populaire, Mohamed Lemine Ch'bih Ould Cheikh Melainine; the leader of the small Parti pour le renouveau mauritanien (PMR), Moulaye El-Hacen Ould Jiyed; the leader of the Union socialiste progressiste et démocratique (USPD), Mohamed Mahmoud Ould Mah; and a retired nurse and the only black Mauritanian candidate, Kane Amadou Moctar, who carried the flag for the Parti pour la légalité et la justice (PLEJ). Mr Ould Melainine, a former minister of planning and of rural development, provided the only real threat to Mr Taya. A former Trotskyite and spiritual leader of the prominent Islamic brotherhood, Qadirya, he carried a message that found favour with young city-dwellers, notably by promising a general increase in salaries and the creation of thousands of new jobs in the administration. He received a respectable 36.2% of the vote in Mauritania's capital, Nouakchott, and 47.7% in Mauritania's second city, Nouadhibou. But he failed to make any impact elsewhere in the country and gathered a low 6.97% of the national vote. Mr Ould Mah, a candidate well known for having run in the 1992 presidential election, received less than 1% of the vote.

High turnout raises eyebrows—

According to official estimates, 75% of the electorate voted, a claim which surprised many independent observers and was widely contested by the opposition parties. Indeed, official figures indicated that just 36% of those entitled to

vote in Nouakchott had done so, while a low 46% was recorded in Nouadhibou. This would imply an almost 100% turnout elsewhere. Mr Ould Melainine described the figure as “improbable”, given the opposition call to boycott the election, and appealed to the Constitutional Council to invalidate the tally, claiming that he saw military officers rigging it in favour of the incumbent president. Mr Ould Mah echoed Mr Ould Melainine’s view when he announced his decision to dissolve his party, the UPSD, and retire from politics following the election “debacle”. In his farewell speech he said that democracy in Mauritania was nothing but that of “tribes and brotherhoods” already in power, a situation that he saw lasting for some time to come.

—and the opposition claims massive rigging

On behalf of the FPO, the leader of the opposition Union des forces démocratiques (UFD), Ahmed Ould Daddah, charged that the “ridiculous” figures had no significance and that there had been many irregularities in the voting bureaux, a view shared by independent observers. He denounced the “use of human and material state resources for partisan ends” by the PRDS and affirmed that senior civil servants had been granted leave during the campaign in order to mobilise electoral support, and that cars and aircraft belonging to the state had been used to transport posters and other materials on behalf of the PRDS candidate. The proscribed black militant organisation, Forces de libération africaine de Mauritanie (FLAM), also denounced the election as a “farce” and claimed that Mr Kane’s candidature was devised by the ruling party in a manoeuvre to show the international community that a black Mauritanian could aspire to the highest office. The only incident officially registered on the election day was in Nouakchott, when police forces intervened to disperse supporters of Mr Ould Melainine who they were protesting at the expulsion of their candidate after he tried to prevent the admission of late-comers favourable to the president.

Mr Ould Taya appoints a team of technocrats to run his government—

On December 18th, following the confirmation of the election result by the Constitutional Council, Mr Ould Taya announced the composition of a new government. A relatively unknown law professor and former director of higher education, Mohamed Lemine Ould Guig, was appointed to the post of prime minister to replace Cheikh El Avia Ould Mohamed Khouna, who resigned after two years in office. Mr Ould Guig leads a 22-strong government, comprising 18 ministers and 4 secretaries of state and containing 10 youthful newcomers (including three women) all with academic and civil service backgrounds. The Ministry of Interior is now under the direction of Colonel Ahmed Ould Minnih, a former secretary-general at the presidency and the only serving military officer in the new cabinet. The new minister for foreign affairs is Mohamed El Hacem Ould Lebatt, a former rector of Nouakchott University.

—while political allies get honorific ministerial roles

Two party leaders, Ahmed Ould Sidi Baba of the RDU and Hamdi Ould Moukness of the UDP, have been thanked for championing Mr Ould Taya’s candidacy during the pre-election period, by being appointed as presidential advisers. The outgoing prime minister becomes secretary-general at the presidency.

Some ministers have no time to hang their hats

In early January Mr Ould Taya dismissed two of the newly appointed ministers. Mohamed Ould Michel, the former governor of the Banque Centrale de Mauritanie (the Central Bank) and nominated as the minister of planning, and

the minister of rural development and environment, Lemrabott Sidi Mahmoud Ould Cheikh, were ousted just 15 days after the appointment of the new cabinet. Each was accused of “major offences” in the management of their ministries. A further mini-shuffle took place in early February when Sghair Ould M'Bareck was promoted from trade to transport, in place of Mohamed Salem Ould Merzoug, who took charge of the Ministry of Water and Energy. The circle was completed with the transfer of Sidi Mohamed Ould Mohamed Vall from the latter ministry to trade.

The opposition is doubtful of the government's capabilities—

The opposition is sceptical about the quality of the new government. Mr Ould Daddah claimed that, despite the election being “non-constitutional and shamelessly rigged”, the new cabinet was no different from the previous one and would be incapable of solving the fundamental problems facing Mauritania. It cannot change anything about the suffering of the people, he said, and cannot make people change their views about the regime that has brought them such a plight.

—and the new prime minister states his case

Mr Ould Guig delivered his inaugural speech to parliament in early January, saying that his government would go “faster and further” in its deeds in order to meet the expectations of Mauritians. He reviewed recent economic performance and congratulated his predecessors on their good management, adding that his priority was to consolidate their gains. Speaking of democratic and civil reforms, he appealed to all Mauritians to participate fully in his programme, as their support was an essential part of the initiative. In addition, the new prime minister promised to pay particular attention to the management of public assets and the broadening of the productive base of the economy. Among other pledges, he echoed Mr Ould Taya's wish to eradicate poverty, unemployment and ignorance. The prime minister said that his government would seek to ensure the stability of economic balances and reinforce competitiveness. He stressed that agriculture and animal husbandry would be given particular attention and underlined the importance of co-ordination in these two fields. Speaking of fishing, he said there would be strict quotas to protect and develop the maritime resources. As for mining, he added that the policy, from now on, would be one of diversification, noting that the General Gold Resources-International Finance Corporation scheme (see Mining and energy) was a promising start.

Press harassment continues—

In mid-January the editor of *Mauritanie Nouvelles*, Bah Ould Saleck, announced that he was suspending publication. The independent weekly newspaper was due to reappear on January 12th, following an earlier three-month suspension, but the French and Arabic editions were seized by the censor and a further three-month ban imposed. The editor said that he was unable to hold out any longer against intense harassment by the authorities; in total, 11 issues of *Mauritanie Nouvelles* have been censored and the paper suspended for 10 months in a period of less than 2 years. Other papers have not escaped the censor's wrath. Three recent issues of *Le Calame* and one of *La Tribune* failed to reach the streets. These bans followed articles about slavery, the outlawed opposition movement FLAM, and electoral fraud. The measures against the

papers were taken under Article 11 on press freedom, which allows the authorities to censor, suspend or ban any publication. Newspapers are required to deposit draft copies with the “public freedom” department of the interior ministry, and only after this department issues a “ready to print” approval can production go ahead. The ministry is not obliged to explain its reasons for withholding permission to print. The victims of this special clause are numerous; not one single independent newspaper has been immune over the past two years.

—while a French television programme angers the government

In mid-January the French television stations, France 3 and Canal France International, broadcast a programme dealing with the practice of slavery in Mauritania. Within days three leading human rights activists were arrested, the president of the Mauritanian Human Rights Association (AMDH), Cheikh Saad Bouh Kamara, the president of the organisation SOS-Esclavage and vice-president of the AC, Boubacar Ould Messaoud, and the secretary-general of the Mauritanian Bar Association and member of the UFD, Brahim Ould Ebeti. Neither SOS-Esclavage nor AMDH is recognised by the government. Mr Messaoud, who appeared in the programme, and Mr Kamara were charged with creating an unauthorised association and spreading false allegations; Mr Ebeti, together with Gemal Ould Yessa, spokesman for the deposed president, Moctar Ould Daddah, and resident in Paris, were accused of belonging to an unauthorised association. Human rights organisations worldwide protested at the arrests, expressing “grave concern” about violations of human rights in Mauritania. Within the country, lawyers staged a 24-hour strike to demand Mr Ebeti’s release and the opposition AC attempted to organise a demonstration in support of the arrested militants. Police waded into people gathering in front of the party’s offices and, according to the AC, arrested party officials who were later charged with organising an illegal demonstration.

Human rights activists get 13-month prison terms

The trial of the three human rights activists opened in early February amid strict security. The public prosecutor asked for three-year prison sentences, and stiff fines of up to UM2m (\$11,700) to be imposed, as well as the seizure of property belonging to SOS-Esclavage. Mr Ould Messaoud, in his defence, claimed to have been the victim of slavery in his youth, as were his forefathers previously. The court refused to let the defence call a witness who had participated in the broadcast, because “slavery does not exist in Mauritania and the court cannot listen to people who claim the contrary”. The judgement, delivered after short deliberation, imposed 13-month prison terms on the accused.

Coast guards fire on Senegalese fishermen

A Senegalese fisherman was killed and several others wounded during an incident in late November when Mauritanian coast guards opened fire. The incident occurred close to Saint-Louis, the hometown of the fishermen, in northern Senegal, where police had to intervene to prevent angry inhabitants attacking Mauritians and their property. Calm was gradually restored after official appeals. Tension remains high in this region, especially following the events of 1989 when, following an incident between coast guards and Senegalese fishermen, race riots broke out in Nouakchott and Senegal causing hundreds of deaths and provoking a massive repatriation of expatriate communities. Mauritania acted swiftly to stem any further discord when, in early February, it released the

money and property seized by the coast guards and promised a bilateral meeting to renegotiate the fisheries agreement signed by the two countries in 1983. This agreement has been on ice since 1989.

- OMVS high commissioner replaced and arrested Babah Ould Sidi Abdalla, the Mauritanian high commissioner of the Senegal River Development Organisation, Organisation de la mise en valeur du fleuve Sénégal (OMVS), was arrested upon his return from Mecca in late January on charges of having "betrayed" his country's interests. Press reports claimed he had used the excuse of rationalising the OMVS secretariat to dismiss senior Mauritanian staff, contrary to the guidelines that require senior appointments to be decided by a ministerial council. Mali's former water resources minister, Cheikna Seydi Diawara, has been appointed in his stead, and Mauritania has asked for a new post of secretary-general to be created and granted to a former Mauritanian minister, Ahmed Salem Ould Saleck. The next OMVS summit, which was delayed because of the electoral calendars of Mauritania and Senegal, will take place in Dakar in May when the structure of the organisation will be reviewed.
- Regional peacekeeping manoeuvres in Mauritania The first African peacekeeping exercise, Guidimakha '98, started on February 20th in south-east Mauritania, extending to parts of Senegal and Mali. It involves contingents from the three countries, together with representatives from Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, The Gambia and Cape Verde, with France, the UK and the US providing logistical support. According to the organisers, some 3,500 troops are expected to take part in the exercise, under the auspices of the UN and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). It is hoped to form a building block for a new inter-African rapid intervention force. In addition, Mauritania will host one of the four military schools that France intends to open in Africa during 1998.
- Students occupy embassy to protest at grant delays A group of 35 students occupied the Mauritanian embassy in Abidjan in early January, taking six diplomats hostage in a bid to obtain payment for four months' arrears in their study grants. There are some 60 Mauritanian students in Côte d'Ivoire, each receiving roughly CFAfr133,000 (\$221) per month. The students remained in the embassy for ten days until their demands were met, while the diplomats were released after a couple of days' detention. Mauritanian students elsewhere embarked on similar protests, notably in Iraq where police evacuated the embassy and arrested 18 of them.
- Libya seeks to mend fences Libya is seeking to improve its ambiguous relations with Mauritania. Mr Ould Taya received an emissary of the Libyan leader, Colonel Muammar Qadhafi, in late December, and discussions centred on easing tension between the two countries. Diplomatic ties were on the brink of rupture late last year, when Libya was openly accused of backing the Nasserists, a pro-Arab movement which condemns the rapprochement between Mauritania and Israel and is highly critical of Mr Ould Taya (4th quarter 1997, page 33).

The economy

Government proposes another balanced budget

One of the last acts of the ousted prime minister, Cheikh El Avia Ould Mohamed Khouna, was his presentation to the National Assembly of a draft budget for 1998. The overall budget, of just over UM48bn (\$281m) and in balance for the second year running, projects an 8% increase in revenue and a 12% increase in spending compared with 1997. According to official and IMF estimates, the government budget, grants included or not, has been in surplus since 1995. The government aims to boost revenue through improved tax collection, while the increased spending will go towards social services and poverty-reduction as well as specific projects such as a census and setting-up a bureau in charge of ensuring national food supplies are adequate. Government investment is projected to rise by 13.4% to UM26.2bn. It was unclear whether the proposed budget left room for the 15% increase in civil service salaries pledged by Mr Ould Taya following his re-election.

World Bank reviews its portfolio

Representatives of the World Bank met other donors and Mauritanian officials in late October to review their operations in Mauritania. While the overall situation was considered to be "healthy", some problem areas were identified. It was suggested that the ongoing programme of sectoral reforms could be improved by allowing greater transparency and exchange of information between the relevant participants. Two "action plans" were proposed. One programme managed by the Bank will look at the national system of contract awards and the support given to national authorities in administering projects. A revision to the current legislation, due to take place by the end of 1998, should help streamline ponderous administrative procedures. The second plan concerns the financial management of projects. Auditors are now expected to submit reports on various projects within six months of the end of each financial year. Overall, these measures should enhance Mauritania's capacity to absorb the funds it receives.

New legal codes are to be debated

Mauritania is progressively modifying its laws on economic and commercial affairs. Draft codes will be presented at a legal workshop in Nouakchott in May 1988. Texts have been prepared with a view to reflecting modern international standards, while respecting traditional Islamic law. Although debates, especially in the local press, will be raised, the adoption of the proposed laws is widely expected. They should provide a sound basis for doing business in the country.

Agriculture

Production fell in 1996/97

Harvests of Mauritania's principal crops fell by almost half in the 1996/97 season reflecting both unfavourable climatic conditions and the particularly high levels registered in the previous season. Looked at over a longer period, output was still below average, but not as poor as in the drought years of 1991-93. Of note is the continuing expansion of rice output, boosted by irrigation projects.

Mauritania: agricultural production and livestock numbers

	1992/93	1993/94	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97
Agricultural production (‘000 tonnes)					
Millet & sorghum	52	80	105	167	55
Paddy rice	25	35	31	53	67
Niebe	13	21	0	2	0
Maize, wheat & barley	2	2	5	2	0
Herd size (‘000 head)					
Cattle	1,200	1,200	1,100	1,125	1,312
Sheep & goats	8,500	8,800	8,800	8,810	10,332
Camels	1,050	1,070	1,080	1,087	1,127

Source: Banque Centrale de Mauritanie, *Bulletin trimestriel de statistique*.

Mining and energy

Oil prospectors are still searching for partners

Shell has rejected a proposal to buy into prospecting ventures in Mauritanian waters contrary to earlier reports (4th quarter 1997, page 39). This is a serious blow to the Australian company Hardman Resources which is anxious to find partners to co-finance exploration on three blocks where it holds concessions. Shell's decision came after it had re-processed seismic results. Hardman is all the more embarrassed by the decision as it has applied for further offshore licences, and remains convinced of the viability of developing the Shafr el Khanjar offshore oilfield, where it estimates potential reserves of 290m-850m barrels. Hardman heads a consortium in which it holds a 72% stake, in partnership with Elixir of Belgium (8%) and Fusion Investment of the UK (20%).

General Gold Resources is in talks with the IFC

The Australian operator of the proposed Guelb Moghrein copper-gold project, General Gold Resources (GGR), is also having problems finding financial partners. GGR claims the mine, situated near Akjoujt, will produce 266,000 tonnes of copper, 802,000 oz of gold and 2,100 tonnes of cobalt over a 13-year period. One source of financing was lost in November, when a Perth-based stock-brokers, Hartley Poynton, withdrew support for an A\$4m (\$2.89m) rights issue needed to finance completion of preliminary work at the site, where GGR hoped to start operations in 1998 for production to start in 1999. A clause in the contract allowed Hartley's withdrawal in the event of a 12.5% fall in the price of gold. Another telling sign came from a report that GGR's partner, the Arab mining consortium, Société araba des mines de l'Inchiri (Samin), which holds a 50% stake in the project, was seeking to sell its equity. Talks are rumoured to be under way between GGR and other potential investors, notably Rothschild Natural Resources. More hopefully, discussions between General Gold Resources and the World Bank's International Finance Corporation (IFC) are reported to be nearing conclusion. The IFC is considering a \$100m contribution in the form of equity participation. The IFC has already taken a similar interest in the Morak gold-from-copper tailings project, in partnership with Minproc Holdings of Australia and Samin. It is difficult to see how GGR can push ahead with the scheme without IFC backing.

Exploration interest remains strong

Initial results from samples taken from the northern part of Rex Diamond's El Hammani concession on the Reguibat plateau, in north-western Mauritania, are

reported to be highly promising. Surveys from the second concession at Akchar are still being processed. This has encouraged the Belgo-Canadian company to pursue its request for a third concession at Tenoumer, that will increase its overall prospecting region to 72,000 sq km. Mauritania continues to encourage new mining ventures. Other than the extension of Rex Diamond's concession, the Council of Ministers has approved a decree granting a US company, Pan African Partnership-Mauritania, a licence to carry out exploration for gold, silver, copper, cobalt and similar materials in the Aroueyit area in north-western Mauritania.

Algeria and Mauritania
renew energy pact

Algeria and Mauritania have extended for another five years the 1987 agreement whereby Algeria manages and supplies the Nouadhibou oil refinery in northern Mauritania.

OPEC-funded power
station goes on stream

The Vienna-based OPEC Fund granted \$2.3m in 1995 for the electrification of Tintane and its immediate surroundings. The power station, comprising five 200 kw generators, was inaugurated in late 1997 and some 600 households are now linked to the network.

The 1.5m-tonnes/year oil refinery operators at approximately 30% of capacity, producing mainly kerosene, gasoline, diesel, naphra and butane.

Aid

Japanese aid might be a
source of corruption

Each year Japan presents a list of aid projects to Mauritania, as to other developing countries, for which it is prepared to provide funding. Products must be purchased from Japanese suppliers, who compete for contracts awarded by the Mauritanian ministries concerned. Thus it is up to the decision-makers at the ministries to determine which Japanese supplier is chosen. But it seems that it has allegedly become customary for the supplier to demonstrate his gratitude by offering bribes, as illustrated in a recent case involving the supply of fertiliser and insecticide to the rural development ministry. Worse, according to Info Nouahcobb, there is no trace of the products which were supposed to be distributed to farmers, and no record of counterpart funds that would have been raised if they had been sold.

French aid for developing
the capital's water
supply—

In mid-December the Caisse française de développement, (now re-named Agence française de développement), granted a loan of FF43.5m (\$7.4m) to the state water and electricity utility, Société nationale d'eau et d'électricité de Mauritanie (SONELEC). The money will be used in a project to exploit resources in the Idini water table, so as to boost supplies to, Nouakchott (3rd quarter 1997, page 38). In addition, France has agreed to contribute FF10m for a modernisation and restructuring programme in the education sector and has also provided FF1m of food aid, bringing total food aid granted by France last year to 6,000 tonnes.

—and Spain promises loans

The Spanish foreign minister, Abel Matutes Juan, spent two days in Mauritania in January. He expressed his country's wish to give impetus to economic co-operation and its readiness to grant loan facilities to Mauritania up to Pta4bn

(\$26m). Whereas Spain is particularly interested in developing ties in fisheries, Mauritania hopes to give priority, as far as bilateral co-operation is concerned, to human development activities, including health, poverty eradication and other integrated development projects. Meanwhile Germany has granted UM114m (\$67m) to finance anti-poverty programmes and UM2.5m to assist a UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation programme aiming at building 118 school classrooms in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou.

ADF is to help in the fight against poverty

The African Development Fund is providing a loan of \$4.4m to support a poverty reduction programme which aims to stimulate low-income households and informal sector entrepreneurs to start-up and develop revenue-generating activities. Specific measures include the establishment of a fund giving credits to microenterprises, and education, and training for targeted groups. The loan is repayable over 50 years and will cover 72% of the \$6.2m project. Other backers include the World Bank and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The ADF has also provided \$1.1m to pay for a pre-feasibility study on water resources for agriculture in the Brakna region.

Kuwait backs electricity project

The Kuwait-based Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD) has granted aid worth \$3.5m to Mauritania for the production of hydro-electricity and the upgrading of the road network. The loan is repayable over 25 years at 3% interest.

The EU continues to support fishing sector

In October the EU handed over four patrol craft and three radar stations to Mauritania to assist with surveillance of the fishing grounds. The \$1.8m gift is funded through the EU Stabex arrangement. In a separate move, the Stabex fund has bought Mauritanian Treasury bonds, which have been deposited to local commercial banks via the Banque Centrale de Mauritanie (the Central Bank), to back new credits for the fishing sector. By this method, Socopêche has obtained UM40m (\$235,000) to finance modernisation of its onshore fish handling facilities.

Quarterly indicators and trade data

Senegal: quarterly indicators of economic activity

		1995		1996				1997			
		3 Qtr	4 Qtr	1 Qtr	2 Qtr	3 Qtr	4 Qtr	1 Qtr	2 Qtr	3 Qtr	4 Qtr
Prices: Dakar	Monthly av										
Consumer prices:	1990=100	143.0	144.3	139.5	140.4	146.3	146.0	144.2	143.0	146.3	148.7 ^a
change year on year	%	5.7	4.3	4.1	3.5	2.3	1.2	3.4	1.9	0.0	n/a
Money & banking	End-Qtr										
M1, seasonally adj:	CFAfr bn	318.0	309.6	311.2	303.7	331.8	335.6	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
change year on year	%	12.1	3.5	5.4	8.9	4.3	8.4	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Discount rate	% per year	8.50	7.50	7.50	7.50	7.00	6.50	6.25	6.25	6.25 ^b	n/a
Foreign trade ^c	Qtrly totals										
Exports fob	CFAfr bn	83.26	52.09	81.46	80.50	91.85	81.02	95.74	95.76	104.69	65.05 ^d
Imports cif	"	127.90	177.57	205.74	202.40	216.03	224.06	242.69	220.30	236.46	175.31 ^d
Exchange holdings	End-Qtr										
Central Bank:											
gold ^e	\$ m	8.4	8.4	8.7	8.5	8.4	8.2	7.6	7.5	n/a	n/a
foreign exchange	"	277.4	266.2	287.1	233.9	277.6	284.8	347.2	297.7	394.1	n/a
Exchange rate											
Official rate	CFAfr:\$	491.5	490.0	503.2	515.3	517.2	523.7	564.4	587.8	593.3	598.8

Note. Annual figures of most of the series shown above will be found in the Country Profile.

^a Average for October-November. ^b End-August. ^c DOTs estimate, figures are subject to revision. ^d Total for October-November. ^e End-quarter holdings at quarter's average of London daily price less 25%.

Source: IMF, *International Financial Statistics*.

The Gambia: quarterly indicators of economic activity

		1995		1996				1997			
		3 Qtr	4 Qtr	1 Qtr	2 Qtr	3 Qtr	4 Qtr	1 Qtr	2 Qtr	3 Qtr	4 Qtr
Prices	Monthly av										
Consumer prices:	1990=100	141.0	139.2	138.9	136.4	140.5	141.4	141.7	143.7	145.0	143.0 ^a
change year on year	%	11.1	5.1	3.2	0.1	-0.4	1.6	2.0	5.4	3.2	n/a
Money	End-Qtr										
M1, seasonally adj:	D m	449.9	473.4	491.3	454.1	474.1	456.2	449.9	549.3	521.6	551.0 ^b
change year on year	%	12.1	16.0	22.0	2.0	5.4	-3.6	-8.4	21.0	10.0	n/a
Foreign trade	Qtrly totals										
Exports fob	D m	25.53	18.90	n/a	97.08	28.69	9.47	15.28	17.47	n/a	n/a
Imports cif	"	315.38	358.66	n/a	875.40	583.83	387.36	413.81	347.77	n/a	n/a
Exchange holdings	End-Qtr										
Monetary authorities:											
foreign exchange	\$ m	97.98	103.81	110.73	102.07	100.27	99.71	93.25	96.54	81.29	93.92
Exchange rate											
Market rate	D:\$	9.630	9.640	9.700	9.790	9.810	9.892	10.015	10.300	10.452	10.530

Note. Annual figures of most of the series shown above will be found in the Country Profile.

^a October only. ^b End-November.

Source: IMF, *International Financial Statistics*.

Mauritania: quarterly indicators of economic activity

		1995		1996				1997			
		3 Qtr	4 Qtr	1 Qtr	2 Qtr	3 Qtr	4 Qtr	1 Qtr	2 Qtr	3 Qtr	4 Qtr
Prices	Monthly av										
Consumer prices ^a :	1990=100	142.3	144.0	145.2	146.1	149.0	150.8	152.2	152.9	155.2	n/a
change year on year	%	5.5	6.4	4.9	4.3	4.7	4.7	4.8	4.7	4.2	n/a
Money	End-Qtr										
M1, seasonally adj:	UM m	19,780	18,631	18,518	17,437	17,712	16,609	16,688	16,839	17,774	17,993
change year on year	%	11.7	-8.3	-5.0	-10.5	-10.5	-10.9	-9.9	-3.4	0.4	8.3
Foreign trade ^b	Annual totals										
Exports fob	\$ m	(575)			573				n/a		
Imports cif	"	(638)			636				n/a		
Exchange holdings	End-Qtr										
Foreign exchange	\$ m	73.4	85.4	87.3	110.8	108.3	139.8	153.6	162.5	225.8	200.4
Exchange rate											
Market rate	UM:\$	134.05	137.11	136.21	139.80	138.16	142.45	144.59	149.27	160.22	168.35

Note. Annual figures of most of the series shown above will be found in the Country Profile.

^a Mauritanian households. ^b DOTS estimate.

Sources: IMF, *International Financial Statistics*; *Direction of Trade Statistics*, yearbook.

Senegal: foreign trade

	\$ '000			
	Jan-Dec 1990	Jan-Dec 1991	Jan-Dec 1992	Jan-Dec 1993
Imports				
Dairy products	46,490	41,737	60,605	70,375
Cereals & products	180,544	115,011	112,710	126,051
Fruit & vegetables & preparations	30,040	24,753	23,127	24,352
Beverages, tobacco & manufactures	29,334	15,303	13,060	14,120
Mineral fuels	258,680	120,418	103,415	103,893
of which:				
crude petroleum	248,628	91,437	79,441	84,129
Animal & vegetable oils & fats	33,186	50,056	52,132	63,915
Chemicals	157,626	155,127	151,023	134,104
Manufactured goods	259,763	168,130	190,318	175,537
of which:				
textile yarn, cloth & manufactures	45,534	28,620	34,258	24,320
iron & steel	64,911	39,688	49,180	51,948
metal manufactures	51,875	34,161	31,904	30,856
Machinery incl electric	235,195	177,720	185,730	168,970
Transport equipment	109,294	71,311	85,368	83,415
of which:				
road vehicles	102,329	66,659	80,890	79,924
Total incl others	1,620,419	1,096,951	1,172,453	1,139,203
Exports fob				
Fish & products	216,041	215,256	186,875	143,623
Oilseed cakes	35,366	17,451	18,889	11,889
Cotton, raw	9,533	20,248	27,409	27,210
Phosphates, mineral	56,962	43,926	66,434	51,166
Salt	7,820	7,625	10,337	9,193
Mineral fuels	96,768	104,390	80,284	87,445
Groundnut oil	129,980	69,534	55,040	33,722
Chemicals	116,680	95,110	127,506	103,819
Machinery & transport equipment	18,470	13,695	21,805	9,328
Total incl others	782,600	652,208	683,031	605,102

	\$ m					\$ m			
	Jan-Dec 1993	Jan-Dec 1994	Jan-Dec 1995	Jan-Dec 1996 ^a		Jan-Dec 1993	Jan-Dec 1994	Jan-Dec 1995	Jan-Dec 1996 ^a
Exports fob					Imports cif				
France	206	80	59	164	France	374	300	387	594
India	68	67	136	149	Spain	34	47	42	93
Italy	31	22	38	69	Nigeria	65	39	78	86
Mali	27	41	45	53	Germany	37	28	60	80
Spain	14	12	2	33	US	59	44	70	61
Côte d'Ivoire	13	8	8	20	Italy	43	55	43	60
UK	3	10	5	19	UK	14	20	22	60
Japan	8	4	2	17	Côte d'Ivoire	49	34	32	59
Benin	10	3	13	16	India	3	3	44	54
Brazil	1	n/a	2	15	Belg-Lux	28	33	38	49
Morocco	15	7	12	14	Thailand	44	33	60	44
Total incl others	671	484	530	806	Total incl others	1,053	884	1,223	1,675

^a DOTS estimate.

Sources: UN, *International Trade Statistics*, yearbook; IMF, *Direction of Trade Statistics*, yearbook.

The Gambia: foreign trade

	D '000				
	Jan-Dec 1990	Jan-Dec 1991	Jan-Dec 1992	Jan-Sep 1992	Jan-Sep 1993
Imports cif					
Food	522,882	566,846	690,667	457,405	412,552
Beverages & tobacco	77,554	72,048	87,493	63,746	88,856
Crude materials	14,617	21,369	20,974	13,881	48,947
Mineral fuels	136,827	195,582	167,364	135,002	96,805
Animal & vegetable oils	22,701	36,661	74,083	45,438	58,690
Chemicals	95,590	149,831	120,733	85,744	83,205
Manufactured goods	310,363	358,011	363,327	245,914	285,120
Machinery & transport equipment	237,797	310,445	413,348	297,749	413,349
Total incl others	1,932,744	1,932,744	2,081,387	1,483,760	1,617,061

	Jan-Dec 1990	Jan-Dec 1991	Jan-Dec 1992	Jan-Sep 1991	Jan-Sep 1992	Jan-Jun 1993
Exports fob						
Fish & preparations	32,809	36,019	19,429	26,515	13,412	10,218
Groundnuts, shelled	63,483	40,433	n/a	40,433	25,660	n/a
Groundnut oil	38,637	18,197	n/a	10,288	0	n/a
Groundnut meal	7,788	9,978	n/a	9,226	6,362	n/a
Total incl others	320,066	371,358	565,734	280,422	472,977	311,449

	\$ m					\$ m			
	Jan-Dec 1993 ^a	Jan-Dec 1994	Jan-Dec 1995	Jan-Dec 1996		Jan-Dec 1993 ^a	Jan-Dec 1994	Jan-Dec 1995	Jan-Dec 1996
Exports fob					Imports cif				
France	1	3	6	8	UK	39	22	20	39
UK	8	8	7	5	France	30	25	11	29
Belgium-Luxembourg	2	n/a	1	1	Germany	15	13	9	24
Japan	35	n/a	n/a	1	Côte d'Ivoire	14	36	19	21
China	n/a	2	1	1	US	11	7	7	18
Netherlands	n/a	1	1	1	Netherlands	22	13	7	17
Senegal	1	6	6	n/a	Brazil	3	3	2	15
Spain	2	2	1	n/a	China	77	11	9	14
Hong Kong	4	n/a	1	n/a	Spain	4	5	4	14
Indonesia	n/a	3	n/a	n/a	Belg-Lux	24	13	10	10
Total incl others	97	35	28	22	Total incl others	375	209	140	272

^a DOTS estimate.

Sources: Central Bank of the Gambia, *Quarterly bulletin*; IMF, *Direction of Trade Statistics*, yearbook.

Mauritania: foreign trade

	UM m				
	Jan-Dec 1991	Jan-Dec 1992	Jan-Dec 1993	Jan-Dec 1994	Jan-Dec 1995
Imports fob					
Food	8,838	13,801	11,358		12,500
Other consumer goods	1,881	2,785	1,603		1,574
Fuels	2,972	3,735	4,212		4,142
Machinery & transport equipment	2,304	3,054	6,429		3,823
Exports fob					
Fish & products	18,044	27,522	26,945	28,073	17,169
Iron ore	17,287	17,377	19,442	22,282	26,353
Gold	n/a	775	1,893	2,605	1,869

	\$ m					\$ m			
	Jan-Dec 1993	Jan-Dec 1994	Jan-Dec 1995	Jan-Dec 1996		Jan-Dec 1993	Jan-Dec 1994	Jan-Dec 1995	Jan-Dec 1996
Exports fob ^a					Imports cif ^a				
Japan	107	129	161	172	France	149	137	152	198
Italy	75	69	108	88	Spain	48	30	51	46
France	63	63	73	62	Belgium-Luxembourg	26	44	54	44
Spain	46	53	65	57	Thailand	9	13	16	33
Belgium-Luxembourg	21	35	37	35	Germany	24	36	32	31
Cameroon	18	22	27	31	Italy	27	22	14	24
Total incl others	423	450	575	573	Total incl others	572	562	638	636

^a DOTS estimate.

Sources: National Statistics; IMF, *Direction of Trade Statistics*, yearbook.

Senegal and Mauritania: French trade

(\$ '000)

	Senegal				Mauritania			
	Jan-Dec 1993	Jan-Dec 1994	Jan-Dec 1995	Jan-Dec 1996	Jan-Dec 1993	Jan-Dec 1994	Jan-Dec 1995	Jan-Dec 1996
Exports fob								
Food, drink & tobacco	83,766	63,857	63,944	72,871	45,255	29,759	38,371	60,165
of which:								
dairy products	37,177	21,861	13,998	21,651	4,262	3,470	2,358	6,100
cereals & preparations	25,611	27,130	26,921	16,863	21,068	15,682	22,147	34,815
sugar & products	5,913	1,201	4,954	14,216	15,775	4,064	9,995	12,551
Mineral fuels	12,181	16,434	24,758	48,918	17,291	6,090	7,580	18,361
Chemicals	79,154	63,796	70,853	78,410	16,694	15,547	16,025	11,333
Rubber manufactures	4,971	5,069	5,721	5,263	2,486	4,426	2,914	3,710
Paper & manufactures	8,980	7,038	12,508	11,534	1,178	1,033	1,193	1,596
Textile fibres, yarn								
& manufactures, incl clothing	9,021	6,382	7,373	11,326	2,162	2,262	1,762	1,774
Non-metallic								
mineral manufactures	6,808	6,615	8,119	9,357	1,482	1,415	1,271	1,855
Iron & steel	14,927	6,982	8,813	9,019	1,355	1,995	5,994	4,556
Metal manufactures	12,124	9,874	16,718	21,994	5,874	5,761	5,638	4,084
Machinery incl electric	100,224	86,770	117,832	159,996	33,041	37,944	35,185	30,041
Transport equipment	33,593	27,867	41,037	52,996	9,394	23,276	12,473	35,569
Scientific instruments etc	9,548	9,667	11,645	11,249	2,568	3,506	2,013	2,452
Total incl others	421,460	363,374	461,599	542,641	142,516	138,215	138,033	180,216
Imports cif								
Fish & products	97,476	94,836	108,657	97,575	4,221	4,841	7,236	5,933
Crude fertilisers & minerals	6,397	6,392	3,853	4,781	1	1	0	6
Metalliferous ores & scrap	477	538	1,738	1,902	65,979	66,069	71,961	71,045
Petroleum & products	0	0	0	0	1,570	0	0	0
Animal & vegetable oils & fats	29,969	47,380	46,136	42,516	0	0	0	0
Total incl others	161,822	183,113	194,095	181,390	72,873	72,673	80,723	77,968

Source: UN, *External Trade Statistics*, series D.

Mauritania: Japan's imports

(\$ '000)

	Jan-Dec 1993	Jan-Dec 1994	Jan-Dec 1995	Jan-Dec 1996	Jan-Nov 1996	Jan-Nov 1997
Imports cif						
Fish & products	113,569	138,414	176,323	188,500	188,022	141,650
Total incl others	117,550	140,861	178,749	189,493	189,006	142,224

Source: Japan Tariff Association, *Japan Exports & Imports*.