



# La Perle

*Eighth Edition, Summer 1999*

Friends of the Republique Islamique de Mauritanie ∞ FORIM

## Membership

*by Terry O'Leary*

We could begin with a dictionary definition of *membership*, but maybe it would be more *à propos* if YOU came up with some sort of definition that FORIM could use. You can make it as FORIM-specific, academic, or fun as you wish. Nothing is written down that will determine a winner—one will be chosen at the September FORIM general meeting to be held as usual at the Ghana Cafe. (See FORIM homepage <[forim.org](http://forim.org)> for exact date and directions to the Ghana Cafe) The judges will be anyone present as of 4:00 PM. The winner will receive one year free membership!!

Questions to ask yourself as you enjoy this issue: "Am I a member in good standing of FORIM?", "What are the benefits of being a member of FORIM?", "Could FORIM accomplish more if I paid my dues?", "Do I have a right to give constructive criticism about the way FORIM spends its money if I am not a dues-paying member?", And, certainly, many more questions...

FORIM has a database of 536 names and addresses, but only 106 paid members. We make available this valuable network of con-

tacts upon request to our dues-paying membership (provided we have authorization to share individuals' information). The current bank balance is \$3,853.00. Two committees have been formed to explore the establishment of a scholarship fund for Mauritians and guidelines for funding development projects in-country so we can maximize our financial resources to the best advantage.

Since the first of the year, FORIM has published two editions of *La Perle* (this is the third!), and you have received them even if you have not paid dues. Unfortunately, we are not able to continue our generosity much longer in fairness to dues-paying members. **One more newsletter will be sent out gratis and then non-paying members will no longer receive *La Perle*. ...and wouldn't that be a shame, considering the excellent quality!**

On the back of this newsletter, you will find a membership form. Please take time to complete and return it along with your annual dues. The success of FORIM depends on YOUR participation.∞

## Mauritania/US Trade Status Restored

*by Lance Kinne*

On June 30, 1999, President Clinton restored Mauritania's eligibility for duty-free treatment under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), ending a suspension of eligibility which dated back to June 25, 1993.

According to the Congressional Research Service, the GSP provides preferential tariff treatment to certain products that are imported from designated developing countries. The primary purpose of the program, which the United States and other industrial countries initiated in the 1970s, is to promote economic growth in developing countries and countries in transition by stimulating their exports. Congress is currently considering legislation to extend the US GSP program.

The Trade Act of 1974 authorizes the President to provide duty-free treatment for any eligible product from any beneficiary developing country (BDC) and spells out criteria for designating eligible countries and products. Currently, about 4,600 products from over 140 BDCs are eligible for duty-free treatment under GSP. In 1998, the US imported \$15.7 billion under the program. Petroleum products, automobile parts, jewelry, and furniture were among

the leading imports. Camel milk may now be right around the corner.

In designating beneficiary countries, the President is directed to take into account the level of economic development of the country, its commitment to a liberal trade policy, the extent to which it provides adequate protection of intellectual property rights, and its observance of internationally recognized workers' rights.

Empirical studies, based mostly on trade data from the late 1970s and mid-1980s, provide some support for the view that GSP stimulates development. Most suggest that GSP has modestly increased exports of beneficiary countries. One study, for example, found that the eligible exports of beneficiary countries to the industrial countries increased by about 8% annually because of GSP.

While GSP eligibility is clearly no panacea for the problems confronting Mauritania's economy, it may be an important step toward becoming a more active participant in the global economy.∞

