



AFRICAN NARRATIVES

From the Desert to the Ocean: An Electricity Interconnection Uniting the Hopes of Morocco and Mauritania



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Introduction

Morocco has launched an ambitious project to connect its electricity grid with Mauritania, a landmark initiative aimed at strengthening bilateral cooperation. Through this interconnection, Mauritania seeks to lower its energy costs by importing electricity from its northern neighbor. The project will allow Mauritania to draw upon Morocco's successful experience in the energy sector, where the nation has achieved full electrification across all its regions and is on track to

generate 52% of its electricity from renewable sources by 2030.

This energy partnership is part of a broader trend of collaboration. Both countries are also developing a major gas pipeline that will connect Nigeria to Morocco, passing through several West African nations, including Mauritania, to supply the European market. These projects signal a deepening of the strategic and economic ties between the two nations.

The Strategic Context: Deepening Moroccan - Mauritanian Relations

The relationship between Morocco and Mauritania is built on deep historical ties and strategic imperatives, making it crucial for regional security and development. It serves as a vibrant model for regional integration, grounded in shared interests and a common approach to challenges like terrorism and organized crime, which are addressed through multi-dimensional security and economic cooperation.

These bilateral ties are being consistently reinforced through political and economic initia-

tives. High-level diplomatic visits and negotiations establish joint strategies for regional stability, while growing trade cooperation lays a solid foundation for future collaboration. The energy sector has emerged as a central pillar of this relationship, with the electricity interconnection project poised to enhance energy security, stabilize supply, and leverage Morocco's renewable energy capacity. These gradual yet steady steps are fortifying the long-term strategic partnership between Morocco and Mauritania.

The Memorandum of Understanding: A Framework for Energy Cooperation

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On January 22, 2025, Morocco and Mauritania signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to formalize their partnership in the electricity and renewable energy sectors. The signing ceremony, attended by the energy ministers of both countries in Rabat, marked a pivotal step toward accelerating joint energy initiatives.

The agreement outlines a comprehensive framework for cooperation, with key provisions including:

- **Infrastructure and Harmonization:**

Implementing projects for rural electrification, promoting clean energy initiatives, and harmoniz-

ing the two countries' electrical systems to ensure seamless integration.

- **Knowledge Exchange:**

Sharing expertise, technology, and best practices in grid management and electrical safety.

- **Capacity Building:**

Strengthening human resources through joint training programs .

- **Energy Security:**

Diversifying energy sources and studying projects to enhance the stability and reliability of electrical grids.

1 Jamal Laadam, Exploring the vital Strategic Relations Between Morocco and Mauritania, December 28, 2024, <https://2u.pw/beNawaRh>

2 Morocco, Mauritania Sign Historic Electric Grid Interconnection Agreement, <https://2u.pw/HSQqTuig>

Discussions during the signing also covered other major strategic initiatives, such as the Nigeria-Morocco gas pipeline and joint development of renewable energy sources like green hydrogen. Both sides emphasized that their partnership is guided by a shared vision for sustainable development, reflecting a mutual desire to enhance Africa's position as a continent of growth and prosperity.

The interconnection project is expected to be implemented in phases, with a final target capacity of 800 to 1,000 megawatts. The geographical proximity of the two nations facilitates a direct and robust connection, allowing them to capitalize on their combined energy potential. For Morocco, this project is a component of its broader strategy to become a global hub for exporting renewable energy to Europe and beyond.

Signing of an agreement for electrical interconnection between Mauritania and Morocco

Aims to

- Securing the national electrical system
- Access to electricity markets in Europe



45%
contribution of
renewable sources
in Morocco's
energy mix

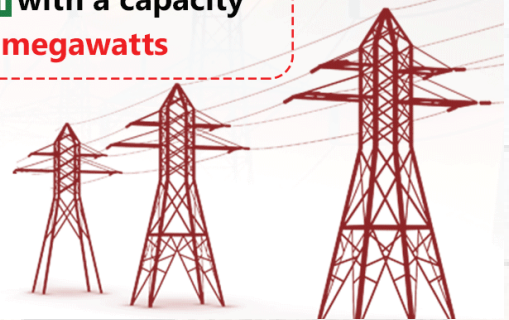
The agreement comes after

- ▶ the signing of a **memorandum of understanding** between the two countries in January 2025
Stipulates :
Developing partnership in the electricity and renewable energy sectors

- ▶ Significant progress in Moroccan interconnection projects with:
Spain with a capacity of **1550 megawatts**
Portugal with a capacity of **1000 megawatts**



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Mutual Benefits of the Interconnection

The project is designed to deliver significant advantages to both countries.

For Morocco:

- **Regional Leadership:**

The project strengthens Morocco's regional standing and advances its "Atlantic Plan," an initiative to unite West African countries through commercial and infrastructure projects, including the natural gas pipeline.

- **Knowledge Exchange:**

It opens avenues for cooperation in emerging technologies. As Mauritania develops its plan to become a leader in green hydrogen—aiming to produce 12 million tons by 2035—the partnership will facilitate a valuable exchange of expertise in green electricity production for both industrial use and hydrogen generation .

- **Market Diversification:**

The interconnection creates a new southern export market for Morocco's surplus electricity. This supplements its existing connection to Europe and provides a vital alternative following the cessation of electricity exports to Algeria in 2021, allowing for electricity trade based on market supply and demand.

- **Economic Development:**

Access to a stable and affordable electricity supply is critical for development across sectors such as industry, healthcare, transport, and education. The interconnection is expected to accelerate this progress by powering Mauritania's economic growth.

- **Energy Transition:**

The project directly supports Mauritania's goal of generating 50% of its electricity from renewable sources—an increase of 40% over recent years. By importing surplus green energy from Morocco's renewable complexes, Mauritania can advance its own clean energy transition while it develops its major domestic renewable projects, which are being planned with international partners.

- **Access to Expertise:**

Morocco has gained pioneering experience in renewable energy since 2009 through large-scale projects like the "Noor" solar complex. Mauritania can leverage this expertise in solar thermal, photovoltaic, and wind power to develop its own capacity and optimize future energy trade .

Shared Environmental Goals

Both Morocco and Mauritania are pursuing ambitious environmental targets by increasing their reliance on renewable energy. These efforts are driven by global climate commitments and economic realities, such as the European Union's impending carbon taxes. By adhering to clean

energy standards, both nations aim to ensure their exports remain competitive. The electricity interconnection is a core component of this shared strategy, enabling them to produce and exchange clean energy and collectively advance their sustainable development objectives.

4 The Morocco-Mauritania Electrical Interconnection: A Strategic Step Towards African Energy Integration and Support for the Royal Atlantic Initiative, <https://2u.pw/5USrgREb>

5 Mauritania, Morocco Sign MOU to Develop Partnership in Electricity and Renewable Energy, Mauritania, Morocco Sign MOU to Develop Partnership in Electricity and Renewable Energy – Mauritanian News Agency

Key Challenges Facing the Project

Despite its promise, the project faces two significant hurdles for Mauritania:

1. Financial Challenge:

Executing this project requires substantial investment in energy infrastructure, including transmission lines, substations, and upgrades to local grids. Securing the necessary funding may be difficult given Mauritania's economic constraints. Consequently, attracting investment through regional and international partnerships will be crucial to expediting implementation.

2. Geographic Challenge:

Mauritania's vast territory and low, widely dispersed population present a logistical hurdle. Extending the grid to remote areas is costly and may offer low economic returns, complicating the goal of providing equitable and efficient electricity distribution. Innovative solutions will be needed to reduce infrastructure costs and ensure the project benefits citizens across the country.





Conclusion and Future Outlook

The Morocco-Mauritania electricity interconnection is a strategic step toward a more integrated and sustainable energy future for the region. While challenges in financing and logistics exist, the project's future directions point toward significant long-term achievements.

This interconnection will enhance energy source diversification, improve environmental sustainability by reducing dependence on fossil fuels, and support broad economic development in Mauritania. Furthermore, it

reinforces the political and economic bonds between the two nations and supports Morocco's ambition to become a continental energy hub.

Ultimately, this project is more than just infrastructure; it represents a long-term commitment to shared prosperity. By addressing technical challenges with innovative solutions like smart grids and distributed renewable energy, Morocco and Mauritania can unlock the full potential of this partnership and achieve their common goals for energy security, environmental protection, and economic growth.