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Mauritania, Northwest Africa—the Story Unfolds

Woodside has developed a strong acreage position in NW Africa over the past few years, with entries to Mauritania (1998), Senegal (2000) and most recently the Canaries (2002). Mauritania is the primary focus of activity and, to date, the Joint Venture has delivered an aggressive, focussed work programme.

After acquiring the first 3-D seismic in the area, two wells were drilled in 2001. The first of these encountered a 90m oil column in Miocene aged channel sands and this is now known as the Chinguetti Field, the first significant discovery in the NW Africa offshore region. The second well targeted a deeper stratigraphic level and, whilst failing to encounter significant hydrocarbons did, however, provide significant information about the regional play systems.

The JV have since acquired further 3-D data during Q2 2002 and in July 2002 commenced a second drilling programme. This included appraisal drilling on the Chinguetti Field with the objective of reducing the uncertainties in reserve estimation and, hopefully, confirming the first commercial accumulation in the country. The programme also included wells on two new prospects, Banda and Thon.

The Joint Venturers are fully committed to unlocking the potential of the area in an aggressive manner and work programme commitments are consistently being met and in many cases exceeded. One of the major factors in the success of the programme to date is the degree of teamwork and cooperation which is evident within the Joint Ventures and, perhaps most importantly, between the JV and Government.