The Ramsar Secretariat offers its sincerest congratulations to the government of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania for taking the necessary steps to remove Parc National du Diawling (Site No. 666) from the Montreux Record.

This saline floodplain consisting of three coastal lagoons and a freshwater lake known as Diama reservoir were designated in 1994 as part of this Ramsar site of International Importance as they justified Criteria 1, 2 and 3 with numerous mammalian and bird species relying on the site as feeding grounds.

A variety of factors led to the inclusion of the site on the Montreux Record, including a lack of enforcement of legislation in the surrounding areas allowing development of rice paddies in the peripheral area that discharged polluted waters near the parks, increasing population growth leading to higher demand for the water resources, etc. The main reason for its inclusion, however, was the accidental introduction of *Salvinia molesta* and *Typha australis* into the Senegal River following the flooding of a poultry farm. The colonization of the water channels led to an increased risk of eutrophication, loss of terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity, and increasing challenges for supply of water to support local populations in subsistence food production.

The authorities set up a national committee chaired by the legal adviser of the Ministry of Environment and Rural Development and involving national and international experts from Ramsar, UNESCO World Heritage Convention, representatives from the Royal Tropical Institute, etc. They were invited on several occasions to the Park in order to assess the spread of the invasive alien species and to discuss proposed solutions, and in 2000 a Ramsar Advisory Mission, led by Patrick Triplet, Anada Tiéga, and Dave Pritchard and representing jointly the Ramsar Convention, the World Heritage Convention, and IUCN - the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, visited Diawling and Djoudj in Senegal and recommended a number of potential solutions.

The solutions attempted were biological and mechanical control. Unfortunately the mechanical methods were not as successful as was hoped, but the use of *Cyrtobagous salviniae* was highly effectivewith several improvements noted:

- Since January 2002 there has been regression of the *Salvinia molesta* alien invasive species from the site with visible signs of decomposition and complete eradication since the end of 2002.
- Increasing numbers of fauna dependent on the site are now returning due to availability of resources to sustain them, i.e., hares, jackals, Nile crocodile, etc.

Through the continued efforts of the national committee and partners, it is believed that similar threats will not affect this site to the extent that they did in this instance. We once again offer our appreciation and congratulation to the government of Mauritania for implementing the Ramsar Convention principles and providing a best practice example that all contracting parties can follow.

-- Cynthia Kibata,
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