



U.S. TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

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USTDA AWARDS GRANT FOR INVESTMENT PROMOTION IN MOROCCO'S OIL AND GAS SECTOR

RABAT, MOROCCO (September 17, 2008) – The promotion of Morocco's upstream oil and gas, and minerals sector is the goal of a USTDA grant that was awarded today to the Office National des Hydrocarbures et des Mines (ONHYM) of Morocco. The grant will be used to fund technical assistance to ONHYM in the preparation of data packages for potential exploration partners and investors, and in arranging promotional industry road shows and meetings in the United States.

The \$331,581 grant was conferred in a signing ceremony held in Rabat. U.S. Ambassador to Morocco Thomas T. Riley and Moroccan Minister of Energy, Mining, Water and the Environment and Director General of ONHYM Amina Benkhadra signed the grant agreement on behalf of the U.S. Government and ONHYM, respectively.

Petroleum and natural gas exploration and development in Morocco is a priority for the Government of Morocco because of the high level of dependence on energy imports and high energy costs. Morocco has had no important oil or natural gas reserves until recently, and has to import virtually all its fuel. Recently, large fields have been discovered near Morocco's eastern border, about 60 miles from the border with Algeria. Offshore exploration activity is also showing promise.

The minerals industry of Morocco is equally important, and also falls under the responsibility of ONHYM. Morocco remains the world's second largest producer of phosphates, after the United States and also produces significant amounts of gold, copper, zinc and iron.

A key factor in promoting U.S. involvement in the upstream oil and gas, and minerals industries of Morocco is the introduction of these opportunities to major exploration companies and service providers. USTDA previously funded a feasibility study in 2002 that culminated in the acquisition by ONHYM of a Geographical Information System for the management of Morocco's subsurface data resources. This allows ONHYM to safeguard its geotechnical data and to process, present and transfer the data efficiently to potential exploration partners and investors.

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The agreement signed today builds upon the previous USTDA assistance by supporting Moroccan efforts to promote investment by U.S. companies in its growing hydrocarbons and minerals industry. ONHYM has selected Invenire, Inc. of Houston, Texas, to provide the technical assistance. In addition to the USTDA grant, Invenire will contribute additional resources toward the completion of the study.

The U.S. Trade and Development Agency advances economic development and U.S. commercial interests in developing and middle-income countries. The agency funds various forms of technical assistance, early investment analysis, training, orientation visits and business workshops that support the development of a modern infrastructure and a fair and open trading environment. USTDA's strategic use of foreign assistance funds to support sound investment policy and decision-making in host countries creates an enabling environment for trade, investment and sustainable economic development. In carrying out its mission, USTDA gives emphasis to economic sectors that may benefit from U.S. exports of goods and services.

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