

**Nomina ta' Raymond Spiteri bhala
Ambaxxatur ta' Malta mhux Residenti ghas-Senegal**

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Mistoqsijiet sottomessi mill-Membri tal-Gvern

1. X'tahseb li huma l-isfidi li ghandu pajjiż bhas-Senegal? U kif qiegħed tara dawn l-isfidi jiġu indirizzati f'dan il-pajjiż? X'inhuma l-binariji, b'mod ġenerali, li behsiebek tahdem fuqhom f'każ li tinhatar ambaxxatur?

Perhaps a brief description of the country itself would be useful to place my feedback, based on personal experience, in perspective further on.

Senegal, or the Republic of Senegal, is a West African country with a land area of around 197,000 km² and a population of about 16.3 million people (To compare – Malta: area of 316 km² and population > 514,000), 3 million of whom live in Dakar, the capital. It enjoys a 513km coastline. Five major ethnic groups (Wolof, Pular, Serer, Jola, and Mandinka) make up 90% of the population, and with European and Lebanese descent, together with other minor groups, making up the remaining 10%.

The country is largely Sunni Muslim with ties to Saudi Arabia.

Senegal has been regarded as a politically stable and economically sound country over the last years.

Senegal is considered the best example of democratic transitioning, becoming a Presidential Republic with Macky Sall, the current President, since 2014. Senegal boasts an independent judiciary with civil law based on French law.

Economic growth has been significant, achieving 7% in 2017 (\$21bn GDP, GDP per capita of \$3,500 but a Gini coefficient of 40%). However, it remains one of the world's poorest countries with around 55% of the population living below the poverty line. This, even though the country has an abundance of natural resources, including phosphates, iron ore, gold, fish, etc. The country continues to depend on donor aid and remittances for continued economic growth, enjoying IMF technical support, US aid and high confidence levels indicated by successful Eurobond issuances.

From a European perspective, Switzerland and Spain are the main exporting countries to Senegal, whilst France, The Netherlands and Spain are the main importers.

Senegal is considered to be successful in managing and containing AIDS and the coronavirus spread, with only 7 doctors per 100,000 people. However, the recent issues with coronavirus in Europe have seen a drain on diaspora (dropping from USD 5B yearly to USD 1B) and a repatriation of people from Europe, in particular France and Italy, which are presenting a challenge on resettling and employment.

It is challenged by low literacy rates, especially for females, lack of good drinking water, poor sanitation, deforestation, and droughts. Yet there are numerous examples of young people taking up farming in an environmentally friendly way, showing entrepreneurship and energy despite the limitations. Currently there are around 190,000 university students, and stars emerge, such as football and basketball players, musicians, artists, authors, and business people.

Senegal is also playing a wider role within the ever-expanding Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Since its inception, Senegal was a leading voice in this community. As the ECOWAS states within the African continent create closer ties with each other, Senegal is remaining relevant and leading with its political, social, and economic policies and agendas. In this light, it is the main contributor to several peacekeeping missions, such as at The Gambia and forming part of the Saudi Coalition intervening in Yemen in 2015.

It would be presumptuous of me to believe that our country can solve all, or any, of the issues of Senegal. If I am nominated as ambassador, I would prefer to focus my efforts on aligning as close as possible the changing Senegalese political landscape with the requirements and agendas set out by our government. I also believe that reciprocal economic ties, including trying to enhance the existing ones, are a natural springboard to improved social and political ties, whilst simultaneously enlarge the economy for more people to benefit as the country undertakes its development journey.

2. Bhala Ambaxxatur mhux Residenti, kif tara li x-xoghol tieghek jista' jwassal sabiex jiżdedu u jitjiebu r-rabtiet politiċi u soċjali bejn is-Senegal u Malta, rispettivament? Liema taħseb li huma l-isfidi prinċipali li ghandna negħlbu sabiex insaħħu r-relazzjoni bejn iż-żewg pajjiżi?

For the record, more than just political and social, the economic ties between our two countries already exist. The best example is that initiated over the last 20 years with Foster Clark Products being a leading player and household name across the country. I see myself working from this platform to open the doors for other Maltese industry players to forge ahead with new markets in the best interest of Maltese exporters.

Senegal is also an established holiday destination for the well-travelled tourist of means. Thus, exploring links between this sector and our tourism industry is an opportunity which I would wish to explore, if interest is expressed.

Like with every other social and political discussion, the main challenge is always one of reciprocal understanding. We would need to address the fact that Senegal, far from our shores and with a diverse language, historic or social ties to Malta, needs to be understood, including the drivers and motivations behind the Senegalese agendas. Social ties could perhaps be developed through new sports and cultural initiatives which could be of mutual interest to both countries.

We would then be able to turn our attention to the economical challenge which many European companies face, such as for example the transfer of funds through the banking system, which often fails to provide an adequate platform for trade.

3. X'tahseb li huma n-niċċ ekonomiċi u kummerċjali li nistgħu nsibu sinerġiji fuqhom bejn Malta u s-Senegal? Kif tara li għandna nsahhu r-relazzjonijiet kummerċjali bejn iż-żewg pajjiżi rispettivi?

Senegal, with its growing economy and population, is regarded as one of the top 20 markets of the future for industry. As already stated, Malta already has a major industry player operating in Senegal, Foster Clark Products (FCP). FCP is looking at new opportunities to expand their activity within the region. Senegal is to be the primary target and test ground for a regional launch, making ties between the countries and a smoothening of operations key. As such, this acts as an excellent pathfinder into a market and society that is relatively unexplored by other Maltese firms eager to export and expand.

One such industry is the tourism industry, valued at 10% of Senegal's annual GDP and estimated at +/- \$2bn. International hotel chains are only now turning their attention to this market which could still be seen as a green field opportunity for Maltese international hoteliers and operators. The country has an amazing geography, largely unspoilt and inhabited with teeming wildlife, and a large and beautiful coastal region where fishing expeditions are second to none.

Senegal has recently broken ties with their French-run ports of Bolore and signed up with DB World to operate their ports. This is being done with the intention of being a receiving hub for containers in the region. Establishing a relationship with our own freeport to be a transshipment hub from Europe could be a potential strategy we could look at.

Another sector we might consider looking at, is the still small but budding gaming industry, which has flourished in neighbouring countries such as Ghana and Nigeria, that set the consumer trends in the region. It would not be too far a stretch to imagine this industry reaching a relevant value in the next 5 to 10 years.

The country also has a dependence on remittances, making this a target for fintech. The possibilities for English language education, export services and support including food preparation research and acceleration for EU export, and others are quite endless.

4. Tara li hemm trattati li jistgħu jithaddmu ahjar bejn iż-żewg pajjiżi? Jew trattati ohra li għandhom jiġu esplorati għaż-żmien li ġej?

In view of the potential opportunities I highlighted above, I believe that Maltese and African relations must evolve beyond that of a passive player. It would be good to explore an Investment Protection Treaty, and a Treaty for the Avoidance of Double Taxation, as is our remit as an EU Member State. This would enable a greater role for Maltese business to help create new trade opportunities and ties, effectively a trade gateway bilaterally reaching out to new emerging and promising markets. These are typically the start points in enabling improved diplomatic channels.

Strategically positioned between Europe and Africa, Malta can promote its potential as a logistical, maritime and aviation hub for Senegal. Ours is an English-speaking and Commonwealth country, as well as an Observer on Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, enabling us to identify opportunities to engage with Africa on selected themes.

5. *Tista' telabora f'it iżjed fuq il-karriera tiegħek fi hdan il-Korp Diplomatiku u/jew il-Ministeru tal-Affarijiet Barranin?*

Up to now, my career has been based in private industry with over 60% of my year (pre-COVID) spent in various African countries that include Senegal. Being a strong believer in total commitment in one's work, I have been appointed as a Global Brand Activation Manager essentially expanding markets, building business and social relations, learning about these diverse cultures, peoples, histories, politics, geographies and current affairs.

It is a challenging and quite difficult job with a high level of job satisfaction especially when the results exceed my expected targets and objectives. I look forward to have the opportunity to use my personal experiences and knowledge in such countries to offer my humble contribution to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in its invaluable and challenging objective to develop new relationships with other foreign states, particularly emerging ones like Senegal, in the best interest of our country.

Mistoqsijiet sottomessi mill-Membri tal-Oppożizzjoni

6. *Tista', bhala persuna midhla sew tal-pajjiż u l-poplu, tindika kif tahseb li għandhom jissudaw iktar ir-relazzjonijiet diplomatiċi ta' pajjiżna mas-Senegal?*

Kindly refer to replies 1, 2 and 3 above to avoid the risk of repetition. In a nutshell, I strongly believe that understanding the culture, history and way of thinking of the Senegalese people is of fundamental importance to start developing a more active and fruitful bilateral relationship between our two countries. In this regard, I humbly feel that I can offer my contribution based on my extensive experience in dealing with Senegalese and other African people.

7. *Tista' tindika x'tahseb dwar is-sitwazzjoni preżenti fir-reġjun u x'pożizzjonijiet wieħed għandu jikkoltiva sabiex inżidu fir-rabtiet diplomatiċi ta' tagħna fil u mal-pajjiżi ġirien?*

Likewise, kindly refer to replies 1, 2 and 3. Moreover, I would add that the entire West African region of which Senegal forms part, should also be of similar interest to Malta. In this regard, Senegal provides the best springboard to Mauritania, Mali, Guinea, and Guinea-Bissau even in view of the tensions between Mali and Guinea-Bissau.

I believe we can also emphasise our strong points – a modern and welcoming country with, amongst other things, a high performing economy, an excellent health service, a highly developed and reliable financial services sector, and the number one maritime register in Europe. The benefits we offer as an EU Member State can also be highlighted.

8. *Tista' tindika jekk għandniex ċittadini ta' tagħna jgħixu hemm u x'interessi kummerċjali jew soċjali jista' jkollna iktar milli qed jiġu żviluppati?*

Very honestly, I do not have any such indication at this point. I would also refer you to replies 2 and 3 specifically.

Apart from this, I would like to create a database of all Senegalese living in Malta using all official channels such as the Immigration Police, Identity Malta, etc.

9. Tista' għalhekk tinforma jekk għandekx xi rabtiet jew investimenti kummerċjali personali hemm?

Kindly refer to my CV setting out my work position with Foster Clark Products. As already stated, my extensive experience in this regard will surely be found useful to assist other initiatives from Maltese businesses to likewise exploit this emerging market. I strongly believe the opportunities are there, it is up to us to duly exploit them as other European countries are already doing.

I do not have any personal investment in Senegal.

10. Tista' tiddikjara jekk hemmx xi forma ta' konflitt ta' interess f'din il-hatra?

I do not perceive a conflict of interest in this position. On the contrary, as I have just stated, I do envisage new opportunities for Malta instead. I am thus committed to work hard in this regard.

11. Tista' tiddikjara jekk għandekx passaport ta' pajjiż ieħor?

I do not own any passport other than the one issued by Malta.

12. Tista' tindika jekk kontx b'xi mod involut f'hidma diplomatika fil-passat u jekk kontx impjegat jew ingaġġat f'xi ministeru?

I kindly refer you to my CV and to reply number 5 above. As shown therein, I was a Board Member to Tech.MT between 2018 and 2020.