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WA BUSINESS LEADER CHOSEN TO CHAMPION MALI-AUSTRALIA RELATIONS

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PRESS RELEASE--The Malian government has made its first move in establishing stronger relations with Australia by appointing Western Australian business leader, Max de Vietri, as an inaugural Australian Honorary Consul for Mali.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, The Hon. Alexander Downer MP, also approved this appointment.

Mr. de Vietri has a long involvement with Africa, through his interest in promoting trade in the region and assisting the countries in their economic development. In the Australian business press and international petroleum trade media he has been widely acknowledged for opening up petroleum and mineral opportunities in Mauritania, Mali, and the Ivory Coast.

Mr. de Vietri has forged strong relationships with governments of West and North Africa, who have seen him as an important facilitator of both trade and economic development between the region and Western companies, particularly mining and petroleum.

Mali already has an established gold and diamond mining industry, with leading Australian exploration companies including BHP and Rio Tinto already operating in the country.

As a close neighbour to Mauritania, which has achieved strong economic benefit as a result of the investment by Australian and other world-class petroleum exploration companies operating in the country, Mali is proactively working towards unlocking the petroleum exploration potential within its own borders and stimulate economic development in the country.

The Republic of Mali has recently passed a new Petroleum Code, developed with the support of Mr de Vietri's ASX listed Baraka Petroleum, and have opened up large acreages in the Taoudeni basin that has already seen world leaders in petroleum exploration and development secure tenement holdings.

It is believed that this process, and the investment of Australian companies in the region, will be enhanced by the establishment of this consulate in Western Australia, a recognised investment centre for the resource industry globally.

In announcing the appointment of Mr de Vietri, the Malian Minister of Foreign Affairs, The Hon. Moctar Ouane, said "the Republic of Mali has previously had no diplomatic or consular representation in Australia. As such, the appointment represents a historic step in the development of closer relations between the two mineral rich nations".

In accepting the appointment, Mr de Vietri said, "I am proud to be presented with such an honour.

"I have been working in and visiting West Africa for over 25 years. I see the potential of the region, but more than that I see the desire the various governments have to embrace foreign investment for the benefit of their people.

"The creation of consular representation allows Mali to increase its standing in Australia and promote the numerous bilateral opportunities that exist between the two countries."

As Honorary Consul, Mr. de Vietri will be Head of Post at the Consulate of Mali in Perth which has consular jurisdiction over Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory. Jurisdiction over the eastern states is headed by Professor Philip Alexander Hamilton who has also been accepted as Honorary Consul for Mali.

The Australian Government has accepted the appointment of two Honorary Consuls because it believes the candidates were both of sound character and enjoy a good reputation in their local communities. The appointment of an Honorary Consul reflects a formal agreement between the sending and receiving governments, as outlined in the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. The international treaty outlines the functions of consular posts which include assisting nationals of the sending state, issuing passports and travel documents, and furthering the development of commercial, economic, cultural and scientific relations between the sending and receiving states.

The Malian Minister of Mining, Energy and Water and the Minister for Investment are both due to visit Australia for the first time in September 2005. They hope to attend industry conventions and meet with their Australian counterparts.

The Premier of Western Australia, The Hon. Dr Geoff Gallop, seconded the Foreign Affairs Minister's approval for a Consulate of Mali to be established in Western Australia.

About Max de Vietri

Max de Vietri is the inaugural Managing Director & CEO of newly formed Australian public company, Baraka Petroleum.

Baraka Petroleum was established to acquire, consolidate and develop oil & gas assets and activities, located in the potential hydrocarbon basins of West Africa.

Mr de Vietri graduated as a Geologist from the University of New South Wales in 1975. He has nearly 30 years experience working with major Australian and international mining and petroleum companies in Australia, Africa, Europe, the Middle East, Asia and South America.

He identified major investment opportunities and was instrumental in the signing of a number of agreements with various governments in West Africa for gold, diamond and petroleum exploration.

Mr de Vietri has been a significant contributor to the present interest in and development of West African oil and gas provinces. He has

exceptional knowledge of local industry and Government in the countries where the company has a presence.

Baraka has one of the largest oil and gas assets in West Africa, which has attracted the attention of international petroleum exploration and production companies. The Company has secured rights to explore and develop eight tenement areas covering over 272 000 km², in Mauritania and Mali.