

Cote d'Ivoire: Reporting on Major News Developments 14 January 2022

The following report highlights plans to resume the political dialogue, rights group expressing concerns over fate of former youth leader, impact of ECOWAS's sanctions on a northern town, cocoa farmers threatening strike, and COVID-19 update. The report includes background information to add context to the news items.

POLITICS

Political Dialogue To Resume on 20 January

The Interior Ministry on 13 January issued a press release to inform that the political dialogue between the government and opposition parties will resume on 20 January. According to the press release, all parties concerned have received the terms of reference that will guide the dialogue.

Background: The political dialogue includes stakeholders such as the ruling RHDP and opposition parties and civil society groups. While the government claims to work for a broad-based gathering, political parties and groups close to Guillaume Soro and Charles Ble Goude were not invited.



Source: Jeune Afrique, 7 January

Rights Group Expresses Concern Over Fate of Former President's Youth Minister

Rights group Amnesty International issued a statement on the situation of former pro-Gbagbo youth leader to criticize the United Nations, the Netherlands, and the Ivoirian Government for their "ambiguous" attitude toward Charles Ble Goude almost two years after his acquittal by the International Criminal Court (ICC). The rights group said that Ble Goude's situation is worrying because there is no legal base that supports it and "one cannot say that he is free." Amnesty International said the "rights of the convicts cannot hang to the humor of governments." Amnesty urged the United Nations and the ICC to work out ways to assure the full freedom and security of people once they are released from The Hague. (Source: Connection Ivoirienne.net)

Background: Ble Goude is yet to obtain his passport to return to Cote d'Ivoire after the ICC acquitted him of rights charges. He blamed the Ivoirian authorities for blocking his passport issuance citing political differences.

ECONOMY

Report Says Northern Town Feels 'Collateral Damages' of ECOWAS Sanctions on Mali

Abidjan.net reports on 13 January that the town of Tengrela, far north at the border with Mali, is experiencing the "collateral damages" of the economic sanctions that the ECOWAS imposed on Mali, including border closure. The report said that dozens of trucks full of cotton and material to produce cement that were initially bound for Mali and Senegal are blocked in Tengrela thus freezing economic activities in the town, jeopardizing the sale of cotton produced in Korhogo, and the running of cement plants in Senegal as well.

Background: The ECOWAS on 9 January imposed heavy sanctions on Mali, including closure of land and air borders between ECOWAS countries and Mali. The regional bloc accused the Malian transitional authorities of failing to come up with a reasonable timetable for the return to civilian rule.

Cocoa Farmers Threaten Indefinite Strike Over Unpaid COVID-19 Relief Fund

Koaci.com reported that three main associations of Ivoirian Cocoa farmers on 13 January informed the public that after they halted their indefinite strike to demand the payment of about \$29,672,000 of COVID-19 relief fund and not receiving any satisfactory response from the government, they will go on strike again. It is purported that the funds are available but are "confiscated" at the level of the Prime Minister's office.

Background: The \$30-million fund aimed to provide financial support to farmers who have been severely hit by the COVID-19 outbreak. The farmers' associations suspended the strike on 12 October 2021 after receiving guarantees that the money would be paid. They are now urging "all the growers to resume the strike starting 24 January until the full payment of the \$30 million." (Source: Koaci.com)

HEALTH

COVID-19 Update as of 13 January

New cases: 237 positive of 4,519 samples (5.2 percent)

Total cases: 78,495

New recoveries: 412

Total recoveries: 71,669

New deaths: 2

Total deaths: 747

Active cases: 6,079

New vaccination doses: 14,923

Total vaccination doses: 7,791,645

Source: Ministry of Health

National Security Council Notes Uptick in COVID-19 Contaminations, Deaths

Addressing the National Security Council on 13 January in Abidjan, the Minister of Health, Public Hygiene, and Universal Health Insurance said his services observed an increase in the number of contaminations and deaths to the COVID-19 pandemic. He said that there has been a significant rise in new cases since 21 December 2021, with an average of 739 cases daily. Indeed, in December, there were 9,274 against 427 in November 2021. The number of deaths is also on the rise as 38 people died since December against 9 in November. The minister added that all the people who died did not take the vaccine shots. (Koaci.com, 14 January)

Background: The Council said that the surge in numbers of fresh cases and deaths is due to the end-of-year celebrations where lots of gathering were organized with people not observing the COVID-19 protective measures.