



Africa Information & Monitoring Services

Cote d'Ivoire: Reporting on Major News Developments 24 January 2022

The following report highlights the former First Lady's political ambitions, opposition parties criticizing ECOWAS's latest sanctions on Mali, the launch of a government social program, COVID-19 update, government countering violent extremism efforts, and reactions to military coup in neighboring Burkina Faso. The report includes background information to add context to the news items.

POLITICS

Former-Former Lady Says New Movement To Seek Electoral Positions

Several Ivoirian media outlets reported that former First Lady Simone Gbagbo recently granted an audience to runaway members of the ex-pro-Gbagbo wing of the Ivoirian Popular Front (FPI). They told her that they were defecting to her Movement of the Capable Generations [Movement des



Afriksoir.net, 23 January

Generations Capables-MGC] adding that they are ready to work with her. Simone Gbagbo seized the opportunity and announced that the MGC is a "political movement, a civic movement," an organization that "aims to intervene in the social, legal, economic, and ethical fields." The MGC will, therefore, seek to "conquer positions and political seats at the national level."

Background: On the occasion of the constituent general assembly of the movement in September 2021, Simone Gbagbo was presented as the godmother of the MGC. The movement,

however, was not invited to take part in the political dialogue between the government and opposition parties.

Four Opposition Parties Criticize ECOWAS Sanctions on Mali

Four opposition parties, including the Parti Ivoirien des Travailleurs (PIT,) the Parti Communiste Revolutionnaire de Côte d'Ivoire (PCRCI), the Union des Socio-Democrates (USD,) and the Rassemblement du Peuple de Côte d'Ivoire (RPCI) on 23 January released a communique to criticize the "illegal and illegitimate" string of sanctions that ECOWAS took against Mali. The four parties recalled that the ECOWAS went far beyond its prerogatives. The four parties express support for Mali and called "on all democrats to act accordingly."

Background: On 9 January, the ECOWAS imposed economic and diplomatic sanctions in response to Malian military leaders' desire to push back elections until 2025. The sanctions

included: immediate recall of ECOWAS ambassadors from Mali; closure of land and air borders between ECOWAS countries and Mali; suspension of all commercial and financial transactions with Mali except for food, pharmaceutical, and medical products, petroleum products, and electricity.

ECONOMY

Prime Minister Patrick Achi Launches Phase 2 of Government's Social Program

Prime Minister Patrick Achi on 22 January launched the second phase of the Government's Social Program called PS-Gouv in Tougbo, in the northeastern Bounkani region. Worth approximately \$6 billion over three years, the PS-Gouv focuses on five strategic axes which are: the fight against terrorist activities in the border areas of the north, the improvement of study conditions in primary, secondary, and higher education, the improvement of the living conditions of households, the professional integration of young people and civic service, and the social coverage of vulnerable populations.

Article Says Anti-Graft Operation at Standstill

A 23 January article in the private news website Afrik Soir observed that the anti-graft operation that president Ouattara initiated some months ago "seems to have lost speed just after a few outbursts." The article warned that the slow pace being observed may give weight to those who suggested that the "clean hands" operation of Alassane Ouattara was just "a facelift operation aimed to appease and reassure the economic partners" of Cote d'Ivoire who have invested a big amount of trust in the "seasoned economist and manager perceived in Ouattara." The article added that "a prolonged silence" may sound like a clear will of the authorities "to protect executives of the presidential party" suspected of financial embezzlement.

Cocoa Board Boss Defuses Tension With Farmers Over COVID-19 Funds

The private news website 7Info on 23 January reports that through various organizations, the coffee and cocoa producers on 21 January decided to suspend their indefinite strike planned to begin on 24 January because of a delay in the payment of COVID-19 support funds worth approximately \$30 million.

Background: The decision came after a meeting with the managing director of the Cocoa Coffee Council, Ives Ibrahima Kone. On the occasion, Kone told the producers that the Government had just disbursed \$8.6 million out of the \$30 billion promised.

Ivoirian Dailies' Turnout Drops From \$10.4 to \$3.5 Million in 10 Years

Samba Kone, president of the National Press Authority (ANP), the regulatory body for the Ivoirian print and online media, revealed on 21 January that the turnout of daily newspapers went down from \$10.4 million in 2011 to less than 3.5 million in 2021, representing a fall by 70 percent. Among factors behind the fall, it is observed that "many readers have turned their backs on the printed newspapers" which indulge more in serving political struggles than doing professional journalism. Kone urged media outlets owners and journalists to be more professionals and to adapt to the new situation ignited by the fast-growing online media sector.

HEALTH**COVID-19 Update as of 23 January**

New cases: 62 positive of 2,253 samples (2.7 percent)

Total cases: 79,814

New recoveries: 243

Total recoveries: 76,006

New deaths: 1

Total deaths: 779

Active cases: 2,566

New vaccination doses: 6,331

Total vaccination doses: 7,916,508

Source: Ministry of Health

SECURITY**Government Launches Program To Counter Terrorist Activities in North**

Prime Minister Patrick Achi on 23 January posted a tweet on his Twitter handle @ACHIPatrick4 (62,564 followers) saying that he launched the second phase of the Government's social plan dubbed PS-Gouv2: "A social program of progress for our fragile populations and our youth, endowed with \$6 billion over three years. It is the strong proof of a solid and united Cote d'Ivoire."



Twitter.com/ACHIPatrick4, 23 January

Background: The social program aims to improve the living conditions of the Ivorian population. During his 22 January visit in the northern town of Tougbo in the Bounkani region, PM Achi described the PS-Gouv2 as a "powerful counterterrorism weapon." The special program also aims to boost the Government's actions relating to youth employment in the northern regions of Bounkani, Tchologo, Poro, Bagoue, Kabadougou, and Folon. The PS-Gouv2 will run from 2022 to 2024.

Government Builds New Military Infrastructure To Counter Terrorism

Ivoirian media reported that President Alassane Ouattara approved a national strategy to fight terrorism. Parts of the measures consist in building several military infrastructures to secure the northern operational zone. The authorities launched the construction of new operational barracks in the northern towns of Kafolo, Kong, Sikolo, and Ouangolo.

Background: The new military infrastructures aims to increase the efficiency of the security forces against terrorist movements. The Government is planning to build other operational barracks to optimize its military capacity on the ground.

TRENDING ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Journalist Prompts Discussion on Military Coup in Burkina Faso

Journalist Antoine Tiemoko Assalé on 24 January wrote a lengthy article criticizing soldiers in Burkina Faso suspected of overthrowing President Roch Marc Kabore. Assale said that since "the primary objective of terrorists is to disorganize states, dismantle republican institutions, undermine the foundations of nations, create confusion and mistrust between peoples, between armies, create war of all against all," the coup underway in Burkina Faso sounds like a victory for the terrorists. He added that the excuse put forward by the uprising soldiers is the need for better resources to combat terrorists, but they will end up confiscating power and resting comfortably inside the presidential palace. The post garnered 529 comments, 750 likes, and was shared 117 times. There was a clear divide among users who commented the post. One side supported the coup because they said that President Kabore not only failed to curb terrorism, but supported the sanctions against Mali. Others said it is a bad thing for the subregion to experience so many coup d'etat in just a few months.