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The Chambre Administrative de la Cour Suprême (administrative bench of the Supreme Court) cancels electoral results in six municipal councils and two regional councils in relation to the 13 October municipal and regional elections. The election re-run will take place on 16 December. Civil society organisation Rassemblement pour la Côte d'Ivoire (RACI) calls on Assemblée Nationale (national assembly) president Guillaume Soro to declare his candidature for the 2020 presidential elections. Secretary of state for private investment Emmanuel Essis warns political instability is preventing Côte d'Ivoire from attaining its full economic potential.

Supreme Court cancels election results in two regional councils and six municipalities

Chambre Administrative de la Cour Suprême (administrative bench of the supreme court) president **Claver Kobo** announced the cancellation on 23 November of electoral results in six municipal councils and 2 regional councils.¹ Election re-runs will take place in the affected localities on 16 December, prolonging uncertainty over which individuals will control the concerned localities.² The court made the rulings in response to 103 allegations of electoral fraud in 60 municipalities and 14 regions in the 13 October municipal and regional elections (see *ARC Briefing Cote d'Ivoire November 2018*).³ The Supreme Court's administrative bench examined 43 appeals on 23 November and cancelled results in the municipalities of **Port-Bouët** and **Lakota**.⁴ On the same day, it also cancelled electoral results in the regions of **Loh-Djiboua** and **Guemon**.⁵ The court confirmed defence minister **Hamed Bakayoko** as winner of the mayoral contest in the **Abidjan** district of **Abobo** after independent candidate **Tehfour Kone** had lodged a complaint against him.⁶ Kone was endorsed by national assembly president and ruling **Rassemblement des Républicains (RDR)** party vice president **Guillaume Soro**.⁷

The administrative bench examined the 45 remaining appeals on 30 November and annulled results in the municipalities of **Bingerville**, **Boko**, **Grand Bassam** and **Rubino**.⁸ Grand Bassam witnessed episodes of violence during the election between supporters of the outgoing mayor, **George Ezaley**, of the opposition **Parti Démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI)**, and **Jean-Louis Moulet**, who represented the ruling presidential coalition, the **Rassemblement des Houphouëtistes pour la Démocratie et la Paix (RHDP)**.⁹ The **Commission Electorale Indépendante (CEI)** (independent electoral commission) initially

¹ Jeune Afrique, 24 Nov 2018

² Koaci.com, 3 Dec 2018

³ Jeune Afrique, 26 Oct 2018

⁴ Jeune Afrique, 24 Nov 2018

⁵ Jeune Afrique, 24 Nov 2018

⁶ Jeune Afrique, 24 Nov 2018

⁷ RFI, 13 Oct 2018

⁸ Koaci.com, 30 Nov 2018

⁹ Koaci.com, 30 Nov 2018

declared Ezaley the winner of the municipality on 16 October but the administrative bench overturned this result.¹⁰ However, Ezaley continues to maintain that he won the municipality.¹¹ The administrative bench of the Supreme Court also upheld the victory of PDCI candidate **Jean Marc Yace** in the Abidjan district of **Cocody** against RHDP representative **Mathia N'Gouan**.¹² Opposition **Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI)** president **Pascal Affi Nguessan** was also confirmed as winner of the **Moronou** regional council.¹³ Government spokesperson **Sidi Tiemoko Toure** announced after an extraordinary cabinet meeting on 3 December that an election re-run would take place for these constituencies on 16 December.¹⁴ Toure said the campaigns for the re-run would take place from 8 to 14 December.¹⁵

Although the administrative bench of the Supreme Court heard 103 appeals, it repealed only eight results. The RHDP, which won 96 councils and 18 regions after the initially declared results, will thus continue to maintain its majority. The spectre of political violence still looms in the lead up to the election re-run. The previous round of elections saw five election-related deaths. Re-run elections will be taking place in some of the localities where violence broke out, such as Lokota and Grand Bassam, giving rise to a risk of repeated incidents of violence.

Will Soro run for president in 2020?

Civil society organisation **Rassemblement pour la Côte d'Ivoire (RACI)** has called on national assembly president Guillaume Soro to declare his candidature for the 2020 presidential elections.¹⁶ This declaration could serve as a catalyst for other organisations and political parties to acknowledge their support for Soro and other potential presidential candidates. The RACI made its call at its fifth assembly, which took place on 18 November in Abidjan.¹⁷ RACI president **Kanigui Soro** (no relation) claims Guillaume Soro is the person best placed to lead Côte d'Ivoire after President **Alassane Ouattara** (2010-present) steps down.¹⁸ Ouattara is in his final term according to the constitution.¹⁹

Despite being the RACI's honorary president, Guillaume Soro was not present at the assembly and has yet to respond to the organisation's declaration.²⁰ The RACI's call follows a similar plea made by the **Union des Soroïstes (UDS)** – a political movement created by Soro's supporters in July 2017 – for Soro to stand for the presidency in 2020.²¹ Soro has not responded to the UDS request either,²² although in a July interview with **France**-based media organs **RFI** and **France 24** in relation to whether he would run for office in 2020, he said that he would "*think about it*".²³

¹⁰ RFI, 30 Oct 2018

¹¹ Koaci.com, 30 Nov 2018

¹² RFI, 24 Nov 2018

¹³ FratMat.info, 1 Dec 2018

¹⁴ Koaci.com, 3 Dec 2018

¹⁵ Koaci.com, 3 Dec 2018

¹⁶ Jeune Afrique, 19 Nov 2018

¹⁷ Jeune Afrique, 19 Nov 2018

¹⁸ Jeune Afrique, 19 Nov 2018

¹⁹ Jeune Afrique, 19 Nov 2018

²⁰ Jeune Afrique, 19 Nov 2018

²¹ Jeune Afrique, 21 Aug 2018

²² Jeune Afrique, 21 Aug 2018

²³ Jeune Afrique, 20 Jul 2018

After Ouattara's announcement at the RHDP general assembly in July that he would not seek a third presidential term, there has been growing speculation about who will replace him.²⁴ At the same assembly, Ouattara expressed the need to transfer power to a new generation.²⁵ Soro was the secretary general of the **Forces Nouvelles de Côte d'Ivoire** rebel group during the civil war (2002-2007) and subsequently prime minister from 2007 to 2012. With this background, he represents the "new generation" to which Ouattara referred. However, Soro has attracted considerable criticism from members of the RDR, of which he is the vice president.²⁶ Soro has not fully endorsed the idea of the merged RHDP party, and RDR members have criticised his lukewarm stance towards the RHDP party.²⁷ His absence from the RHDP general assembly in July added to suspicion that he does not support the idea of the RHDP. Soro denies rumours that he and President Ouattara are at loggerheads,²⁸ although within the presidential coalition, it is believed that prime minister **Amadou Gon Coulibaly** is Ouattara's preferred successor. If Soro were to declare his candidacy for the presidency and could not contest under the RHDP banner, he could run as an independent or under another party's banner. As Côte d'Ivoire moves closer towards the 2020 presidential contest, Soro will have to address questions surrounding his political future in a post-Ouattara Ivorian political landscape.

Political instability stalling Ivorian economic prosperity

A **World Bank** report released on 16 November describes Côte d'Ivoire as one of the emerging markets where high-growth firms have a greater chance of attaining sustainable growth.²⁹ This should encourage Ivorian authorities to take measures to capitalise on the World Bank's positive outlook for Côte d'Ivoire. In the report, entitled "*High Growth Firms: Facts, Fiction and Policy Options for Emerging Economies*", the World Bank's vice president for equitable growth, finance and institutions, **Ceyla Pazabasioglu**, expressed the institution's desire to assist the Ivorian public administration to maximise this potential.³⁰ The World Bank's role would be to improve the capacity of entrepreneurs and businesses by promoting innovation, productivity and overall growth of companies.³¹

Ivorian secretary of state for private investment **Emmanuel Essis** noted that Côte d'Ivoire is on the right path with respect to realising its economic potential.³² Essis, who is also the director general of the **Centre de promotion des Investissements en Côte d'Ivoire (CEPICI)** (centre for the promotion of investment in Cote d'Ivoire), cited Côte d'Ivoire's ability to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) as confirmation of this claim.³³ According to the **United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)**, FDI to Côte d'Ivoire increased from \$577m (2016) to \$675m (2017).³⁴ This is a significant increase from the \$150m that Côte d'Ivoire obtained in 2012.³⁵ The government currently allocates 20-

²⁴ Jeune Afrique, 17 Jul 2018

²⁵ Jeune Afrique, 17 Jul 2018

²⁶ Jeune Afrique, 21 Aug 2018

²⁷ Jeune Afrique, 21 Aug 2018

²⁸ Jeune Afrique, 20 Jul 2018

²⁹ FratMat.info, 16 Nov 2018

³⁰ FratMat.info, 16 Nov 2018

³¹ FratMat.info, 16 Nov 2018

³² RFI, 17 Nov 2018

³³ RFI, 17 Nov 2018

³⁴ RFI, 17 Nov 2018

³⁵ L'Intelligent d'Abidjan, 19 Nov 2018

22% of its annual budget towards public investment, while seven years ago, it dedicated only 10-11% to this domain.³⁶

Essis referred to Côte d'Ivoire's improvement in the **World Bank's 2019 Doing Business Report**.³⁷ The report, released on 31 October, indicates that Côte d'Ivoire improved its ranking by 17 places from 139 in 2018 to 122 in 2019 (see *ARC Briefing Côte d'Ivoire November 2018*).³⁸ Essis said that Côte d'Ivoire had undertaken business reforms in 12 domains.³⁹ This allowed the World Bank to rank Côte d'Ivoire as one of the top 10 global business climate reformers, alongside **African** counterparts **Kenya** and **Togo**.⁴⁰ Essis said the government hopes that the imminent adoption of the new investment code, slated for January 2019, will improve the business environment.⁴¹

International Finance Corporation (IFC) director general for **West and Central Africa**, **Aliou Maiga** reiterated the positive outlook for Côte d'Ivoire at the 2018 **Ease of Doing Business Initiative (EDBI)**, which took place in Abidjan from 26-28 November.⁴² The EDBI is an annual event organised with the support of the World Bank, at which African countries meet to share their experience and knowledge with respect to carrying out business reforms.⁴³ Maiga praised Côte d'Ivoire's efforts to improve its business climate and said other countries could replicate Côte d'Ivoire's actions.⁴⁴ Prime minister Amadou Gon Coulibaly pledged that the government would continue to carry out reforms, to ensure the private sector's implication in the economy.⁴⁵

However, Essis acknowledged that Côte d'Ivoire's volatile political climate has prevented the country from being a more attractive investment destination.⁴⁶ Despite the notable increase in FDI, Côte d'Ivoire obtained only 4.9% of FDI invested in the **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)**.⁴⁷ By comparison, **Ghana**, whose economy is comparable in size to that of Côte d'Ivoire, attracted \$3.25 billion in FDI in 2017.⁴⁸ Essis argued that the discrepancy is due to Ghana's political stability.⁴⁹ Essis said that Côte d'Ivoire averaged 6-7% gross domestic product economic growth rate during the 1960's and 1970's, due in large part to its political stability.⁵⁰ Côte d'Ivoire has averaged 8% GDP economic growth since 2011.⁵¹ Essis claims that Côte d'Ivoire could attract up to \$1.5 billion annually in FDI, but only if the private sector functions in an environment where there is political stability.⁵² Essis suggests that Côte d'Ivoire should adopt an industrialisation policy in order to create jobs and improve living conditions for the 47% of the population that lives in poverty.⁵³

³⁶ L'Intelligent d'Abidjan, 19 Nov 2018

³⁷ RFI, 17 Nov 2018

³⁸ World Bank, 31 Oct 2018

³⁹ RFI, 17 Nov 2018

⁴⁰ World Bank, 31 Oct 2018

⁴¹ RFI, 17 Nov 2018

⁴² Koaci.com, 27 Nov 2018

⁴³ Ease of Doing Business Initiative

⁴⁴ Koaci.com, 27 Nov 2018

⁴⁵ Koaci.com, 27 Nov 2018

⁴⁶ Koaci.com, 27 Nov 2018

⁴⁷ Koaci.com, 27 Nov 2018

⁴⁸ Koaci.com, 27 Nov 2018

⁴⁹ Koaci.com, 27 Nov 2018

⁵⁰ L'Intelligent d'Abidjan, 19 Nov 2018

⁵¹ L'Intelligent d'Abidjan, 19 Nov 2018

⁵² L'Intelligent d'Abidjan, 19 Nov 2018

⁵³ Koaci.com, 27 Nov 2018

Political stability is a crucial factor in ensuring Côte d'Ivoire improves its economic standing. Côte d'Ivoire's history of political violence has made both domestic and foreign investors reluctant to invest in an otherwise attractive market. The World Bank confirmed this assertion in July (see *ARC Briefing Côte d'Ivoire August 2018*):

"The reduction in private sector contribution to GDP growth has been attributed to recent socio-political uncertainty over the presidential coalition's selection of a candidate for the 2020 presidential elections, and how opposition parties will react. The private sector appears to be taking a 'wait and see approach' considering Cote d'Ivoire has a history of election-related violence."⁵⁴

If Côte d'Ivoire is able to have a peaceful presidential election cycle and a smooth transition to succeed President Ouattara, this will bode well for its political stability.

Planner

January 2019, **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *RFI*. Adoption of new investment code

July 2019: **Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) Traité d'Amitié et de Coopération (TAC)** conference;

2020 **Côte d'Ivoire** *Abidjan.net*. Scheduled presidential elections

Chronology

6 Dec 2018 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Koaci.com*. Petroleum and renewable energy minister **Thierry Tanoh** says Cote d'Ivoire will construct the first floating solar energy plant in Africa;

4 Dec 2018 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Jeune Afrique*. The **Kadio-Morokro** family takes over **Petro Ivoire** after \$21.6m financing from **South Africa**-based **Vantage Fund**;

3 Dec 2018 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Koaci.com*. Government spokesperson **Sidi Tiemoko Toure** announces the municipal and regional election re-run will take place on 16 December, while campaigns will take place from 8 to 14 December;

26 Nov 2018 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Koaci.com*. Cote d'Ivoire hosts the 9th edition of **Ease of Doing Business** conference from 26-28 November;

30 Nov 2018 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Koaci.com*. The **Chambre Administrative de la Cour Suprême** (administrative bench of the Supreme Court) annuls election results in four municipalities;

29 Nov 2018 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Bloomberg*. Cote d'Ivoire-based **Société Agricole**, owned by **Bouake** mayor **Nicolas Djibo**, has reportedly made a \$250m bid to take over liquidated cocoa producer **SAF Cacao**;

23 Nov 2018 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Koaci.co* The **Chambre Administrative de la Cour Suprême** (administrative bench of the Supreme Court) announces the cancellation of election results in two regional councils and two municipalities;

⁵⁴ World Bank, 12 Jul 2018

18 Nov 2018 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Jeune Afrique*. The **Rassemblement pour la Côte d'Ivoire (RACI)** calls on **Assemblée Nationale** (national assembly) president **Guillaume Soro** to declare his candidature for the 2020 presidential elections;

16 Nov 2018 **Washington D.C (United States)** *World Bank*. **World Bank** report entitled "*High Growth Firms: Facts, Fiction and Policy Options for Emerging Economies*" describes Côte d'Ivoire as an emerging market where high-growth firms have a greater chance of attaining sustainable growth;

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