

**AFRICA RISK CONSULTING****Côte d'Ivoire Briefing March 2021**

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**Côte d'Ivoire Summary 17 March 2021**

*Ivorian prime minister and defence minister Hamed Bakayoko passes away in Freiburg (Germany), reportedly from liver cancer. Bakayoko is Côte d'Ivoire's second prime minister to pass away in less than a year. Bakayoko, a widely well-regarded politician, was seen as the leading candidate to succeed President Alassane Ouattara (2010-present) when his term finishes in 2025. Bakayoko's sudden death reopens the succession race for potential candidates. The ruling Rassemblement des Houphouëtistes pour la Démocratie et la Paix (RHDP) wins 137 out of 255 seats during the 6 March legislative elections, maintaining its absolute majority in the Assemblée Nationale (national assembly). The African Development Bank (AfDB) in its 2021 African Economic Outlook estimates that Côte d'Ivoire will experience gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 6.2% and 6.5% respectively in 2021 and 2022.*

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**Prime minister Bakayoko's death creates another power vacuum ...**

Ivorian prime minister and defence minister **Hamed Bakayoko** passed away on 10 March in **Freiburg (Germany)**, reportedly from liver cancer.<sup>1</sup> Bakayoko was an integral part of President **Alassane Ouattara's** (2010-present) inner circle and had held the position of prime minister since July 2020, succeeding **Amadou Gon Coulibaly**, who died following an illness earlier in the month (see *ARC Briefing Côte d'Ivoire July 2020*). Bakayoko was extremely popular both within and outside of **Côte d'Ivoire** and was seen as a potential successor to President Ouattara. His sudden death has sent shockwaves throughout Ivorian society and across the **African** continent and created a political vacuum that will be difficult to fill.<sup>2</sup>

Presidential director of cabinet **Fidele Sarassoro** announced Bakayoko's death on the state broadcaster on 10 March.<sup>3</sup> Bakayoko had been out of Côte d'Ivoire since 18 February, when he travelled to **France** with his wife,<sup>4</sup> in order to undertake a series of medical tests.<sup>5</sup> His last public appearance in Côte d'Ivoire was on 10 February at a ceremony in the **Abidjan** commune of **Abobo**, to present candidates for the ruling **Rassemblement des Houphouëtistes pour la Démocratie et la Paix (RHDP)** ahead of the 6 March legislative elections (see below).<sup>6</sup> Bakayoko's conspicuous absence from the candidate investiture ceremony on 16 February<sup>7</sup> was ascribed to general fatigue, which prompted Ouattara to place Bakayoko on medical leave.<sup>8</sup>

Bakayoko's recent health issues were well documented. He had contracted **Covid-19** twice and experienced a serious bout of malaria, visiting France in January for medical tests.<sup>9</sup> However, unverified rumours emerged that Bakayoko had been poisoned. Bakayoko was admitted to the

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<sup>1</sup> Jeune Afrique, 10 Mar 2021

<sup>2</sup> Abidjan-based African Development Bank analyst

<sup>3</sup> Jeune Afrique, 10 Mar 2021

<sup>4</sup> Le Figaro, 19 Feb 2021

<sup>5</sup> RFI, 19 Feb 2021

<sup>6</sup> Jeune Afrique, 4 Mar 2021

<sup>7</sup> Abidjan.net, 17 Feb 2021

<sup>8</sup> Jeune Afrique, 4 Mar 2021

<sup>9</sup> Jeune Afrique, 4 Mar 2021

**Hôpital Américain de Paris** on 3 March<sup>10</sup> but transferred to **Universitätsklinikum Freiburg** (Freiburg University Teaching Hospital) in Germany on 6 March when his condition deteriorated.<sup>11</sup> Bakayoko's doctors revealed that he was suffering from an advanced stage of liver cancer, and that it was too dangerous to operate.<sup>12</sup>

President Ouattara appointed **Patrick Achi** and **Birahima Téné Ouattara** respectively as interim prime minister and defence minister on 8 March to ensure clarity with respect to the coordination of government action.<sup>13</sup> Téné Ouattara is President Ouattara's brother and occupied the post of minister of presidential affairs before this appointment.<sup>14</sup> Following Bakayoko's death, Ouattara in a post on social media described Bakayoko as his "*son, collaborator and model for the youth*".<sup>15</sup> Ouattara declared eight days of national mourning from 12-19 March and a state burial for Bakayoko on 19 March.<sup>16</sup>

Bakayoko, popularly known as "*Hambak*", was a heavyweight on the Ivorian political and social scene for over 30 years. His political engagement began with his leadership of the Ivorian students' association while studying medicine in **Burkina Faso**.<sup>17</sup> However, after dropping out of university, he took advantage of the liberalising Ivorian political climate and started **Le Patriote** newspaper, which would become the official publication of the **Rassemblement des Républicains (RDR)** political party.<sup>18</sup> Bakayoko became a media executive, heading **Radio Nostalgie Afrique**, a branch of France-based media group **NRJ**, from 1993-2003.<sup>19</sup> As an organiser of cultural and entertainment events, he developed good relations with Ivorian artists and others from across the continent.<sup>20</sup> In 2003, following the **Linas-Marcouissis** peace agreement, he was appointed information and communications minister, a post he held until 2011.<sup>21</sup>

After Ouattara's election as president in 2010, Bakayoko became interior minister. However, in 2017, Ouattara appointed him defence minister in the wake of successive military mutinies.<sup>22</sup> In this capacity, Bakayoko contributed significantly towards reforming and enforcing discipline within the armed forces and reducing the influence of former **Assemblée Nationale** (national assembly) president **Guillaume Soro**, who was accused of instigating the army revolts.<sup>23</sup> Bakayoko had gained enough prominence within the regime to be considered a potential presidential candidate for the 2020 presidential election, following the death of Ouattara's chosen successor, Gon Coulibaly.<sup>24</sup> Bakayoko had also developed a grassroots political base following his election as mayor of Abobo in 2018.<sup>25</sup> His northern roots and popularity amongst youth would have given him access to key electoral bases. As Grand Master of the **Grande Loge de Côte d'Ivoire (GLCI)**, Côte d'Ivoire's largest **Masonic** lodge, he had access to individuals and networks within and beyond Côte d'Ivoire.<sup>26</sup> Bakayoko also enjoyed a close relationship with first lady **Dominique Ouattara**.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Jeune Afrique, 4 Mar 2021

<sup>11</sup> DW, 8 Mar 2021

<sup>12</sup> Jeune Afrique, 11 Mar 2021

<sup>13</sup> Abidjan.net, 8 Mar 2021

<sup>14</sup> Abidjan.net, 8 Mar 2021

<sup>15</sup> Koaci.com, 10 Mar 2021

<sup>16</sup> Koaci.com, 12 Mar 2021

<sup>17</sup> Abidjan-based Researcher

<sup>18</sup> Jeune Afrique, 17 Mar 2021

<sup>19</sup> Jeune Afrique, 17 Mar 2021

<sup>20</sup> Abidjan-based researcher

<sup>21</sup> Jeune Afrique, 17 Mar 2021

<sup>22</sup> Jeune Afrique, 17 Mar 2021

<sup>23</sup> Abidjan-based researcher

<sup>24</sup> Abidjan-based researcher

<sup>25</sup> Abidjan-based researcher

<sup>26</sup> Abidjan-based African Development Bank analyst

<sup>27</sup> Abidjan-based researcher

Bakayoko's appointment as prime minister was reportedly opposed by members of the RHDP hard line faction, including RHDP executive director **Adama Bictogo** and national education minister **Kandia Camara**.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, Bakayoko was the lead campaign director for Ouattara's controversial re-election and coordinated the trilateral dialogue between the government, opposition and civil society in December, which resulted in the opposition's commitment to participate in the recently concluded legislative elections (see *ARC Briefing Côte d'Ivoire November-December 2020*). Bakayoko was also directly involved in negotiations to facilitate the return of exiled former president **Laurent Gbagbo** (2000-2010) to Côte d'Ivoire and he reportedly lobbied for the removal of security forces outside former president **Henri Konan Bedié's** (1993-1999) Abidjan residence after the presidential elections.<sup>29</sup>

### ... as the succession race kicks off again

Bakayoko was not only seen as the leading figure to replace Ouattara at the end of his presidential term in 2025 but also as an individual who could act as a bridge between the government and opposition and ease the culture of conflict that has plagued Côte d'Ivoire over the last 30 years.<sup>30</sup> His death once again opens the door for individuals and factions within the RHDP to manoeuvre and better position themselves in the presidential succession race.<sup>31</sup>

Interim prime minister Patrick Achi looks likely to be appointed permanently as prime minister. Achi, a longstanding member of government, was infrastructure minister from 2000-2017 under the respective presidencies of Gbagbo and Ouattara.<sup>32</sup> The 64-year-old Achi was promoted to minister of state in July and has assumed more responsibilities, particularly in the health and economic domains. Achi is from the south and has a sound political base as president of **Mé** regional council. He was elected member of parliament (MP) for **Adzopé** constituency during the recently organised legislative contest (see below).<sup>33</sup> As former vice president of the opposition **Parti Démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI)**, he could be an attractive presidential candidate for the RHDP by taking away votes from the PDCI.<sup>34</sup> Achi is a France- and **United States (US)**-educated trained engineer, whose technocrat profile appeals to Ouattara, and he has established strong working relations with multilateral institutions and the foreign private sector.<sup>35</sup>

Local observers believe that Birahima Téné Ouattara, popularly referred to as "*Photocopie*" (photocopy) due to his resemblance to his elder brother, could assert himself as a possible successor, with President Ouattara's help.<sup>36</sup> The 65-year-old, a trained economist and banker by profession, spent most of his professional career working in the local private financial sector.<sup>37</sup> His political engagement began in 1994, with the founding of the RDR, where he served as party treasurer. In 2013, he was voted mayor of **Kong** and elected regional council president of **Tchologo** in 2018.<sup>38</sup> As presidential affairs minister, he had privileged access to the head of state, but was also given the responsibility of overseeing the functioning of the **Garde Republicaine** (republican guard) and the **Groupeement de Sécurité du Président de la République** (presidential security battalion).<sup>39</sup> As defence minister, he will now be able to gain an understanding of one of the most strategic domains of national interest.<sup>40</sup> Other individuals to watch out for include RHDP executive director Adama Bictogo

<sup>28</sup> Abidjan-based African Development Bank analyst

<sup>29</sup> Jeune Afrique, 17 Mar 2021

<sup>30</sup> Abidjan-based African Development Bank analyst

<sup>31</sup> Abidjan-based African Development Bank analyst

<sup>32</sup> Jeune Afrique, 11 Jul 2020

<sup>33</sup> Abidjan-based African Development Bank analyst

<sup>34</sup> Jeune Afrique, 11 Jul 2020

<sup>35</sup> Abidjan-based African Development Bank analyst

<sup>36</sup> Abidjan-based African Development Bank analyst

<sup>37</sup> Financial Afrik, 11 Mar 2021

<sup>38</sup> Financial Afrik, 11 Mar 2021

<sup>39</sup> Jeune Afrique, 8 Mar 2021

<sup>40</sup> Abidjan-based African Development Bank analyst

and political affairs minister **Cissé Bacongo**, who is mayor and MP for the Abidjan commune of **Koumassi**.<sup>41</sup>

### Ruling RHDP wins absolute majority in legislative elections

The ruling Rassemblement des Houphouëtistes pour la Démocratie et la Paix (RHDP) won 137 seats in the 6 March legislative elections, maintaining its absolute majority in the **Assemblée Nationale** (national assembly).<sup>42</sup> The opposition coalition of the Parti Démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI) and **Ensemble pour la Démocratie et la Souveraineté (EDS)** won 50 seats, while independent candidates and the government-recognised branch of the **Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI)** respectively obtained 26 and two seats.<sup>43</sup> This was the first time since 2010 that Côte d'Ivoire's three largest parties have simultaneously taken part in elections. Since 2011, only the government-recognised wing of the FPI had participated in elections, with the faction aligned to exiled former president Laurent Gbagbo boycotting all contests.<sup>44</sup>

The **Commission Electorale Indépendante (CEI)** (independent electoral commission) reported it had validated 1,266 candidatures to compete for 255 available seats. The RHDP won 167 seats in 2016, but following the PDCI's withdrawal from the ruling coalition, it held 148 seats at the time of voting.<sup>45</sup> The RHDP had set a target of 128 seats in order to obtain an absolute majority and deployed close to 30 cabinet ministers as candidates, as well as several directors-general and high-ranking state functionaries to increase the party's chances of reaching that goal (see *ARC Briefing Côte d'Ivoire February 2021*).<sup>46</sup>

The PDCI and EDS, which represents the pro-Gbagbo wing of the FPI, agreed to establish a coalition for the elections, which would see them present a single candidate across different constituencies. While there were disagreements in some localities about whether to present a single candidate list, in total the PDCI-EDS coalition fielded 240 candidates.<sup>47</sup> The third major participation platform consisted of the FPI, **Union pour la Démocratie et la Paix en Côte d'Ivoire (UDPCI)**, **Congrès Panafricain des Jeunes et des Patriotes (COJEP)** and **Agir** political parties. FPI president **Pascal Affi N'Guessan**, who created the coalition, described it as a "*troisième voie*" (third option) for voters. In addition to political party candidates, 800 independents also participated in the elections.<sup>48</sup>

The stakes for the elections were high, due in part to the Ivorian electoral system, which applies a "*First Past The Post*" (FPTP) majoritarian system, rather than a proportional one, meaning that voting is a "*winner takes all*" situation.<sup>49</sup> The zero-sum nature of elections has contributed to Côte d'Ivoire's engrained culture of electoral violence.<sup>50</sup> The 2020 presidential elections witnessed the death of 87 individuals due to election-related violence (see *ARC Briefing Côte d'Ivoire November 2020*) while five people died during the 2018 municipal and regional elections (see *ARC Briefing Côte d'Ivoire November 2018*).

CEI president **Ibrahime Coulibaly-Kuibert** assured the public on 5 March that steps had been taken to ensure a high level of security during the voting process, with the deployment of security and defence forces.<sup>51</sup> Voting by Côte d'Ivoire's 7.3 million eligible voters took place on 6 March across 221,135 polling stations. After casting his ballot in the Abidjan commune of **Cocody**, President

<sup>41</sup> Abidjan-based African Development Bank analyst

<sup>42</sup> Abidjan.net, 9 Mar 2021

<sup>43</sup> Abidjan.net, 9 Mar 2021

<sup>44</sup> ARC Côte d'Ivoire analyst

<sup>45</sup> Abidjan.net, 1 Feb 2021

<sup>46</sup> Jeune Afrique, 10 Feb 2021

<sup>47</sup> RFI, 6 Mar 2021

<sup>48</sup> RFI, 6 Mar 2021

<sup>49</sup> RFI, 6 Mar 2021

<sup>50</sup> ARC Côte d'Ivoire analyst

<sup>51</sup> Koaci.com, 5 Mar 2021

Ouattara expressed his wish for voting to be peaceful and free of the incidents that marred the 2020 presidential elections.<sup>52</sup> PDCI leader and former president Henri Konan Bedié, who also voted in Cocody, encouraged Ivorians to vote en masse, calling on the government to take steps to secure ballots.

Election day was generally peaceful without any major incidents reported.<sup>53</sup> Local non-governmental organisation (NGO) **Indigo Côte d'Ivoire**, which trained and deployed 500 election observers, acknowledged that voting was “*calm*”.<sup>54</sup> Indigo programme director **Arsene Konan** based his opinion on preliminary reports from 477 observers, but denounced the use of social media platforms by various candidates to prematurely declare themselves victorious in their constituencies. **Commission Nationale Droits de l'Homme (CNDH)** (national human rights commission) president **Namizate Sangaré** thanked the government and CEI for their efforts to organise a hitch-free election, but said the CNDH had recorded 78 minor incidents across 11 regions.<sup>55</sup> A joint international election observer mission led by **South Africa-based Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA)** and US-based **Carter Center** declared voting was largely conducted in a professional and transparent manner.<sup>56</sup> Mission head **Denis Kadima** acknowledged the role of traditional authorities, police and civil society in helping to create this scenario.<sup>57</sup> The **European Union (EU)** praised the “*constructive attitudes of all political parties*” that participated.<sup>58</sup>

The CEI declared provisional results on 9 March, with the RHDP victorious in 106 constituencies and securing 137 seats.<sup>59</sup> The PDCI-EDS coalition won 38 constituencies and obtained 50 seats, of which 23 will belong to PDCI members, while the EDS will have eight parliamentarians, making the PDCI the largest opposition party in the National Assembly.<sup>60</sup> Independent candidates won 26 seats across 24 constituencies, while the **Ensemble Pour Bâtir (EPB)** platform and UDPCI each won eight seats.<sup>61</sup> The FPI won two seats.

The RHDP was unable to match its 2016 performance, but nevertheless secured an absolute majority.<sup>62</sup> RHDP executive director Adama Bictogo suggested the RHDP will see its number of MPs rise to 153, with 16 successful independent candidates being RHDP departmental delegates.<sup>63</sup> The majority of cabinet ministers and high-ranking party officials were victorious in their various constituencies.

Successful candidate and position	Constituency
Hamed Bakayoko (prime minister)	Séguéla
Patrick Achi (minister of state, presidency secretary general)	Adzopé
Adama Bictogo (RHDP executive secretary)	Agboville
Ally Coulibaly (foreign affairs)	Hambdol
Cissé Bacongo (political affairs)	Koumassi
Kandia Camara (national education)	Abobo

<sup>52</sup> Koaci.com, 6 Mar 2021

<sup>53</sup> ARC Côte d'Ivoire analyst

<sup>54</sup> FratMat.info, 7 Mar 2021

<sup>55</sup> FratMat.info, 7 Mar 2021

<sup>56</sup> FratMat.info, 8 Mar 2021

<sup>57</sup> FratMat.info, 8 Mar 2021

<sup>58</sup> Koaci.com, 9 Mar 2021

<sup>59</sup> Koaci.com, 9 Mar 2021

<sup>60</sup> Koaci.com, 9 Mar 2021

<sup>61</sup> Koaci.com, 9 Mar 2021

<sup>62</sup> Koaci.com, 9 Mar 2021

<sup>63</sup> Koaci.com, 10 Mar 2021

The RHDP consolidated its dominance in its stronghold of northern Côte d'Ivoire, with late prime minister Hamed Bakayoko winning in Séguéla, despite not campaigning due to his hospitalisation in France and Germany.<sup>64</sup> The RHDP won six seats in another party stronghold, Abobo, Abidjan's largest commune, and pulled off an upset, with trade minister **Souleymane Diarrassouba** winning in the political capital, **Yamoussoukro**, a traditional PDCI stronghold, although PDCI members have challenged his victory.<sup>65</sup>

Eight RHDP cabinet ministers lost in their constituencies.<sup>66</sup> These included tourism minister **Siandou Fofana (Port-Bouët)**, mines and geology minister **Jean-Claude Kouassi (Djébonoua)**, budget minister **Moussa Sanogo (Touba)** and employment minister **Dosso Moussa (Mankona)**. Ouattara made it clear in the lead up to the elections that his next cabinet appointments would be contingent on the results obtained by ministers.<sup>67</sup> However, the constituencies in which the ministers were unsuccessful are historical PDCI and FPI support bases, making it likely that Ouattara will appoint the unsuccessful candidates to positions such as government advisers, granting them similar privileges to those of ministers.<sup>68</sup>

The PDCI-EDS secured victories in constituencies where they derive their core support. In Abidjan, the PDCI won in the communes of **Marcory, Plateau** and Port-Bouët, while the EDS list, led by its president **Georges-Armand Ouégnin**, won six seats in Abidjan's second largest commune, **Yopougon** which the RHDP had held since 2011.<sup>69</sup> Yopougon has long been a bastion of support for Gbagbo.<sup>70</sup> Gbagbo's son, **Michel Gbagbo**, will serve as an MP in this constituency.<sup>71</sup> Former commerce minister **Jean-Louis Billon** won for the PDCI in **Dabakala**, while the PDCI emerged victorious in Bedié's hometown of **Daoukro**.<sup>72</sup> The PDCI and EDS faced off against each other in Gbagbo's hometown of Gagnoa, where PDCI executive secretary **Maurice Guikahué** defeated former MP and FPI vice president **Odette Lorougnon**.<sup>73</sup> The PDCI suffered losses in the coastal town of **Grand Bassam** and Yamoussoukro.<sup>74</sup> The biggest loser in the elections was Pascal Affi N'Guessan, whose faction of the FPI secured only two seats, with Affi N'Guessan winning in his hometown of **Bongouanou**.<sup>75</sup> Affi N'Guessan's alliance partner, **Abdallah Albert Mabri Toikeusse**, fared better, as the UDPCI obtained eight seats in the far west regions of Côte d'Ivoire.<sup>76</sup>

The legislative elections are significant for several reasons. Abidjan-based political analyst **Sylvain N'Guessan** notes that these were the first elections since 1995 in which violent incidents did not occur.<sup>77</sup> The last time Côte d'Ivoire's three leading political parties participated in elections, in 2010, election-related violence caused 3,000 deaths.<sup>78</sup> Secondly, the RHDP's dominance is notable. Despite the withdrawal of the PDCI and its alliance with the EDS, the RHDP maintained an absolute majority in the National Assembly, demonstrating once again its ability to mobilise the largest segment of the electorate.<sup>79</sup> After last year's controversial presidential elections, the RHDP needed this victory in order to regain lost legitimacy.<sup>80</sup> Thirdly, the return of pro-Gbagbo supporters to the Ivorian political

<sup>64</sup> Jeune Afrique, 10 Mar 2021

<sup>65</sup> Jeune Afrique, 10 Mar 2021

<sup>66</sup> Jeune Afrique, 10 Mar 2021

<sup>67</sup> Abidjan-based African Development Bank analyst

<sup>68</sup> Abidjan-based African Development Bank analyst

<sup>69</sup> Abidjan.net, 9 Mar 2021

<sup>70</sup> ARC Côte d'Ivoire analyst

<sup>71</sup> Koaci.com, 9 Mar 2021

<sup>72</sup> Abidjan.net, 9 Mar 2021

<sup>73</sup> Abidjan.net, 9 Mar 2021

<sup>74</sup> Abidjan.net, 9 Mar 2021

<sup>75</sup> Abidjan.net, 9 Mar 2021

<sup>76</sup> Abidjan.net, 9 Mar 2021

<sup>77</sup> RFI, 10 Mar 2021

<sup>78</sup> DW, 8 Mar 2021

<sup>79</sup> RFI, 10 Mar 2021

<sup>80</sup> RFI, 10 Mar 2021

scene after a 10-year absence could reinvigorate opposition activity. The FPI has a strong tradition of grassroots mobilisation and, with the election of former Gbagbo ministers such as **Hubert Oulaye** and **Emile Guirréoulou** as well as the potential return of Gbagbo and other FPI exiles, the party could experience a renaissance in the coming years.<sup>81</sup> Lastly, despite a law stipulating that 30% of party candidates should be women, only 11% of registered candidates were women, with 32 women elected as MPs making up 12.5% of parliament.<sup>82</sup>

### AfDB projects 6.2% economic growth in 2021

The **African Development Bank (AfDB)** predicts gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 6.2% and 6.5% respectively for Côte d'Ivoire in 2021 and 2022. This is an improvement from the 1.8% growth registered in 2020 and indicates the economy is recovering from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>83</sup>

The AfDB published its **2021 African Economic Outlook** on 12 March, providing perspectives on the state of Africa's 54 economies.<sup>84</sup> According to the report, Côte d'Ivoire will experience pre-Covid-19 economic growth rates in 2021. Although Côte d'Ivoire managed to avoid recession, weakened global demand, which negatively affected export-oriented sectors, largely contributed to the fall in growth from the 2019 figure of 6.4% to 1.8% in 2020.<sup>85</sup>

Côte d'Ivoire's economic growth rate			
2019	2020	2021 (Projected)	2022 (Projected)
6.4%	1.8%	6.2%	6.5%

Sectors that saw major contractions in export activity include export agriculture (2.2%), mining (4.8%), forestry (16.5%) and petroleum products (26.9%).<sup>86</sup> Inflation increased from 0.8% in 2019 to 1.8% in 2020, mainly because of increased food and transport prices. The budget deficit also saw a noteworthy increase from 2.3% in 2019 to 5.5% in 2020, due to increased health expenditure and economic support initiatives implemented by the government during the pandemic, which were largely financed by loans from multilateral and regional financial market lenders.<sup>87</sup> These include the 1,700 billion FCFA (\$2.8 billion) plan launched by the government in March 2020 to support the national economy in the wake of the pandemic outbreak (see *ARC Briefing Côte d'Ivoire April 2020*).<sup>88</sup>

The AfDB expects the Ivorian economy will experience a quick rebound, but this is contingent on the implementation of the second phase of the **Plan National de Développement (2021-2025)** (national development plan), the ability to raise domestic and external financial resources, maintaining a stable socio-political environment and global control of the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>89</sup> The recently concluded political dialogue between the government, civil society and opposition, as well as the violence-free 6 March legislative elections, are positive signs.<sup>90</sup> The AfDB suggests that agriculture, construction, petroleum products, transport, trade, investment and consumption will be the key drivers of growth in Côte d'Ivoire.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>81</sup> RFI, 11 Mar 2021

<sup>82</sup> RFI, 10 Mar 2021

<sup>83</sup> 2021 African Economic Outlook, 12 Mar 2021

<sup>84</sup> 2021 African Economic Outlook, 12 Mar 2021

<sup>85</sup> 2021 African Economic Outlook, 12 Mar 2021

<sup>86</sup> 2021 African Economic Outlook, 12 Mar 2021

<sup>87</sup> 2021 African Economic Outlook, 12 Mar 2021

<sup>88</sup> Sika Finance, 1 Apr 2020

<sup>89</sup> 2021 African Economic Outlook, 12 Mar 2021

<sup>90</sup> ARC Côte d'Ivoire analyst

<sup>91</sup> 2021 African Economic Outlook, 12 Mar 2021

The budget deficit is also a positive indicator. The AfDB expects the deficit to fall from the 2020 figure of 5.5%, to 4.3% and 3.3% in 2021 and 2022 respectively.<sup>92</sup> While the debt to GDP ratio rose by 14% annually from 2015-2019, this was due in large part to financing the first phase of the PND (2016-2020). However, Côte d'Ivoire has maintained a reasonable debt ratio, currently 41.7% of GDP and is set to rise to 42.5% during the 2021-2022 timeframe, and below the 70% debt threshold set by the **West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU)**. Nonetheless, the AfDB suggests that Côte d'Ivoire presents a moderate debt risk from 2020-2040, which could escalate if it fails to establish buffers against external shocks.<sup>93</sup>

Côte d'Ivoire is the largest economy in the WAEMU region and was one of only a handful that avoided economic recession in 2020. The **Direction des Prévisions, des Politiques et des Statistiques Economiques (DPPSE)** (directorate of forecasts, policies and economic statistics) reports that Côte d'Ivoire created 118,114 jobs in the formal sector in 2020, a 24.7% increase compared to the 2019 figure of 94,750.<sup>94</sup> The positive economic outlook is encouraging for current as well as potential investors in Côte d'Ivoire.

## Planner

Jul 2021 **Montpellier (France)** Africa Intelligence. **France-Afrique** summit

## Chronology

15 Mar 2021 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Sika Finance*. The **Direction des Prévisions, des Politiques et des Statistiques Economiques (DPPSE)** (directorate of forecasts, policies and economic statistics) reports that Côte d'Ivoire created 118,114 jobs in the formal sector in 2020, a 24.7% increased compared to the 2019 figure of 94,750;

14 Mar 2021 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Sika Finance*. Director of external trade at the commerce ministry **Fadiga Kaladji** says Côte d'Ivoire harvested 450,000 tonnes of bananas in 2019, generating 145 billion FCFA (\$263.7m) in revenue and making it the seventh largest banana producer in the world and the first in **Africa**;

12 Mar 2021 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *African Economic Outlook*. The **African Development Bank (AfDB)** predicts gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 6.2% and 6.5% respectively for Côte d'Ivoire in 2021 and 2022, an improvement from the 1.8% growth registered in 2020;

12 Mar 2021 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Sika Finance*. The **Banque d'Investissement et de Développement de la CEDEAO (BIDC) (ECOWAS Investment and Development Bank)** has granted the Ivorian government a 58 billion FCFA (\$105.4m) loan to finance two projects to improve access to water in rural localities;

12 Mar 2021 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Koaci.com*. The opposition **Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI)** says the planned return from exile of former president **Laurent Gbagbo** in mid-March has been postponed until further notice, taking into account the conclusion of his appeal procedure at the **International Criminal Court (ICC)** scheduled for 31 March and the death of prime minister **Hamed Bakayoko**;

12 Mar 2021 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Koaci.com*. President **Alassane Ouattara** declares eight days of national mourning, from 12-19 March, following the death of prime minister **Hamed Bakayoko**;

11 Mar 2021 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Abidjan.net*. Interim prime minister **Patrick Achi** denies rumours that he was ill and evacuated to seek medical treatment abroad;

10 Mar 2021 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Koaci.com*. The **Collectif des Victimes en Côte d'Ivoire**

<sup>92</sup> 2021 African Economic Outlook, 12 Mar 2021

<sup>93</sup> 2021 African Economic Outlook, 12 Mar 2021

<sup>94</sup> Sika Finance, 15 Mar 2021

(**CVCI**) (collective of victims in Côte d'Ivoire) intends to approach the **Conseil National des Droits l'Homme (CNDH)** (national human rights council) to oppose the potential return of exiled former president **Laurent Gbagbo** to Côte d'Ivoire;

10 Mar 2021 **Freiburg (Germany)** *Jeune Afrique*. Côte d'Ivoire's prime minister and defence minister, **Hamed Bakayoko**, passes away at the age of 56 from liver cancer;

9 Mar 2021 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Abidjan.net*. The ruling **Rassemblement des Houphouëtistes pour la Démocratie et la Paix (RHDP)** wins 137 seats in the 6 March legislative elections, maintaining its absolute majority in the **Assemblée Nationale** (national assembly);

8 Mar 2021 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Abidjan.net*. President **Alassane Ouattara** signs two executive decrees appointing **Patrick Achi** as interim prime minister and **Téné Birahima Ouattara** as interim defence minister;

8 Mar 2021 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Jeune Afrique*. Prime minister **Hamed Bakayoko** is reportedly transferred to a hospital in **Germany**, following initial hospitalisation in **France**;

8 Mar 2021 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Abidjan.net*. **South Africa**-based **Electoral Institute for a Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA)** and **United States**-based **Carter Center** applaud the inclusive and peaceful atmosphere of the 6 March legislative elections, calling it a significant improvement from the tension-filled 31 October presidential elections that led to 87 deaths;

6 Mar 2021 **Abidjan (Cote d'Ivoire)** *Koaci.com*. Legislative election voting gets underway;

3 Mar 2021 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Sika Finance*. Côte d'Ivoire raises 66.6 billion FCFA (\$120.3m) through the issue of an "*obligation de relance*" (ODR) (stimulus bond) on the **West African Economic Monetary Union (WAEMU)** regional financial market;

1 Mar 2021 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Koaci.com*. Minister of state and secretary general at the presidency **Patrick Achi** is the first Ivorian to receive the **Covid-19** vaccine as the country kicks off its national vaccination programme;

27 Feb 2021 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Abidjan.net*. Six leading multinational cocoa producers have called on local regulator **Conseil Café Cacao (CCC)** (cocoa and coffee council) to reduce cocoa prices to enable their purchase of 100,000 tonnes of cocoa;

26 Feb 2021 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Sika Finance*. The government launches construction of a 3 billion FCFA (\$5.4m) industrial zone at **Bondoukou** dedicated to the cashew nut sector;

26 Feb 2021 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *VOA*. Côte d'Ivoire receives 504,000 doses of the **United Kingdom**-manufactured **AstraZeneca/Oxford** vaccine through the **World Health Organisation (WHO)**-supported **Covax** vaccine procurement mechanism;

26 Feb 2021 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Koaci.com*. President **Alassane Ouattara** undertakes a visit to France, where he will meet President **Emmanuel Macron** at the **Palais de l'Elysée** in **Paris**;

25 Feb 2021 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Agence Ecofin*. The **United States** bilateral aid programme for low-income countries, **Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC)**, will allocate 157 billion FCFA (\$292m) to the **Abidjan Transport** project;

24 Feb 2021 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Financial Afrik*. Côte d'Ivoire raises 71.5 billion FCFA (\$131m) through the issue of the "*obligation de relance*" (ODR) (stimulus bond) on the **West African Economic Monetary Union (WAEMU)** regional financial market;

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