

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

Côte d'Ivoire Monthly Briefing September 2024

Côte d'Ivoire Summary 26 September 2024

Vice president Thiémoko Meyliet Kone leads a delegation to attend the 9th Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) to consolidate relations and promote investment opportunities. The government has taken further measures to combat terrorism, freezing the assets of 29 individuals, mostly living in Côte d'Ivoire. The opposition Front populaire ivoirien (FPI) ends its cooperation with the ruling Rassemblement des houphouëtistes pour la paix et la démocratie (RHDP) and joins former president Laurent Gbagbo's (2000-2010) Parti des peuples africains - Côte d'Ivoire (PPA-CI). The International Criminal Court announces it will close its office in Côte d'Ivoire.

Government participates in FOCAC

China held the 9th **Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC)** between 4 and 6 September, aimed at mapping out plans for cooperation between the country and the continent for the next three years. **Côte d'Ivoire** maintains good relations with China, both diplomatically and commercially, and an Ivorian delegation went to FOCAC with the mission to consolidate these ties and seek fresh investments.¹ Vice resident **Thiémoko Meyliet Koné**, who represented President **Alassane Ouattara** (2010-present), led the delegation.²

Trade between the two countries is strong and on an upward trajectory, reaching \$5.3 billion in 2023, up 21% compared to 2022.³ Rubber and cocoa were the main exports to China, representing one-fifth of total trade value.⁴ Economy and planning minister **Nialé Kaba** said at FOCAC that the main intention this time was to source Chinese investments in the infrastructure and manufacturing sectors and ensure that important roles would be reserved for local entrepreneurs, as per a policy commonly labelled 'local content'.⁵ The Ivorian stand at FOCAC highlighted the country's reputation as a cocoa producer and the vice president invited investors to come to his country and invest in transformative industries.⁶

China's ambassador to Côte d'Ivoire **Wu Jie**, highlighted areas China is interested in such as selling electric vehicles (EVs), creating transformative industries for cocoa and rubber, participating in the development of sustainable energy, cooperating in the domains of education and information technology and realising major infrastructure projects such as the stadiums, roads and bridges that were put in place for the **Africa Nations Cup**, held in January 2024. From a Chinese perspective, all these works form part of China's **Belt & Road Initiative (BRI)**.⁷ New infrastructure projects include the extension of **San Pedro Port**, the country's principal cocoa hub and the construction of a dry port in the northern town of **Ferkessédougou**.

¹ RFI, 4 Sep 2024

² Ivoire Matin, 4 Sep 2024

³ Ivoire Matin, 4 Sep 2024

⁴ L'Inter, 26 Aug 2024

⁵ RFI, 4 Sep 2024

⁶ L'Infodrome, 18 Sep 2024; Connection Ivoirienne, 6 Sep 2024

⁷ La Diplomatie d'Abidjan, 19 Sep 2024

Government takes measures to combat terrorism, freezing the assets of 29 individuals

Authorities confirmed in early September that on 22 August they froze the assets of 29 individuals alleged to have been involved in the financing of (or preparation of) terrorist activity. The move follows a ministerial decree issued in May, providing for financial sanctions extendable to all individuals suspected of financing terrorism.⁸ The list contains 29 names, all men aged 24 to 61 and living in Côte d'Ivoire. Half of them (15) are **Burkinabè**, seven Ivorians and five **Maliens**. Their occupations vary from being traders to cattle handlers and religious figures. Cattle is an often overlooked but singularly lucrative market to be involved in; cattle theft has been described by experts as one of the most destructive things that can happen to a community, especially in the **Sahel Region**, which borders Côte d'Ivoire.

Two of the individuals are reported to be Ivorian government officials, fitting a pattern of collusion between state employees and insurgents that has also been seen in Mali and **Nigeria**, among others.⁹ Charges against these individuals range from recruiting individuals and sourcing finance for terrorist acts to illegally holding arms. The assets of the 29 suspects are now frozen for a period of six months.¹⁰

The border region of Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso in particular has seen several terrorist attacks, particularly in 2020 and 2021, while Mali-based terrorists perpetrated the single largest attack on Ivorian soil in 2016. Close to 60,000 refugees from Burkina Faso are currently in Côte d'Ivoire, having fled the violence in their own country.¹¹ In July, security forces apprehended an unknown number of suspected jihadists, although some local media reports it was dozens, in the border region and transferred them to **Abidjan**. Defence minister **Téné Birahima Ouattara** said:

*"We must barricade ourselves so that terrorists that are cornered, specifically in Burkina Faso, cannot come and settle on our soil and commit new attacks such as the ones in Kafolo (in the north) in 2020 or Grand Bassam in 2016."*¹²

The actions come in a period of heightened tension with Burkina Faso, where junta leader Captain **Ibrahim Traore** routinely accuses Côte d'Ivoire of harbouring elements wanting to destabilise his country. The departure of the three junta-led Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Mali and **Niger**) from the **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)**, of which Côte d'Ivoire is a member, and the hostility of the three towards ECOWAS complicates the fight against these forms of terrorism. Therefore, these and other moves by the Ivorian authorities must be seen principally as preventative action. The last terrorist attack in Côte d'Ivoire took place in 2021 and the authorities have every intention to keep it that way.¹³

Opposition FPI ends cooperation with the ruling RHDP to join PPA-CI

After one year and four months in a 'marriage of convenience', the opposition **Front populaire ivoirien (FPI)** central committee tasked party leader, **Pascal Affi N'Guessan** with ending its partnership with the ruling **Rassemblement des houphouëtistes pour la démocratie et la paix (RHDP)**. The central committee argued that there is very little if any democracy in the country under RHDP's rule and that the partnership itself is *"detrimental, pointless and obsolete."*¹⁴ The FPI also denounced the lack of any tangible action towards national reconciliation, ostensibly the principal motivation among the FPI leadership to seek collaboration with the RHDP in the first place.¹⁵

⁸ Le Monde 4 Sep ; AfrikSoir, 3 Sep 2024

⁹ Le Monde 4 Sep

¹⁰ AfrikSoir, 3 Sep 2024

¹¹ Le Monde 4 Sep

¹² Jeune Afrique, 19 Jul 2024

¹³ Connection Ivoirienne, 6 Sep 2024

¹⁴ Connection Ivoirienne, 10 Sep 2024

¹⁵ RFI, 9 Sep 2024

However, since the FPI was virtually decimated in the last legislative and local elections, it has been unable to hold its own ground in any contest; as a result, it has taken to accusing the RHDP of being “*power hungry*”.¹⁶ The RHDP reacted laconically to N’Guessan’s departure. The FPI will now join former president **Laurent Gbagbo’s** (2000-2010) **Parti des peuples africains-Côte d’Ivoire (PPA-CI)**, which is highly likely to field Gbagbo as presidential candidate.

Gbagbo founded the FPI in 1982, making it the second oldest party in Côte d’Ivoire after the **Parti démocratique de Côte d’Ivoire (PDCI)**. It had a significant presence in the **Assemblée nationale** (national assembly) while Gbagbo was president between 2000 and 2010, when he lost the presidential election. Gbagbo had to step down as party leader after he was elected president and N’Guessan took over. N’Guessan served as prime minister between 2000 and 2003 under Gbagbo.

However, he and N’Guessan fell out over the issue of the FPI’s participation in subsequent elections. Gbagbo still headed the FPI when he was sent to **The Netherlands** to face trial (see below) which caused the party to split over the issue of whether or not it should take part in legislative elections with their leader in prison. The faction that chose to go ahead was led by N’Guessan. However, the FPI performed poorly and when Gbagbo returned he denounced N’Guessan and started his own party. This new realignment slightly strengthens the hands of both politicians, who individually have weak electoral positions.¹⁷

The rapprochement between Gbagbo and N’Guessan is a partial reconstruction of the left-leaning coalition, which has its origins in the FPI. N’Guessan may find a position in the new political alignment but two other prominent FPI actors -former first lady **Simone Ehivet** (whom Gbagbo divorced) and former youth minister **Charles Blé Goudé** (repeatedly disregarded by Gbagbo) - will not be joining the PPA-CI’s appeals to reunite the left in Côte d’Ivoire. Already, Blé Goudé has formally announced his intention to run for president and Ehivet is widely expected to do the same.¹⁸

A slightly strengthened left-leaning movement pulls the presidential contest of 2025 more in the direction of a three-way battle between the incumbent Ouattara (RHDP), the main opposition candidate **Tidiane Thiam** of the PDCI and a N’Guessan-supported Laurent Gbagbo with others running as spoilers.

The International Criminal Court to close Côte d’Ivoire office

The **International Criminal Court (ICC)** announced on 18 September that it will be closing its office in Côte d’Ivoire for budgetary reasons and cease operations in mid-2025.¹⁹

The ICC began working on the Côte d’Ivoire situation in 2011, two years before the Ivorian government ratified the **Statute of Rome** that established the ICC, but after the government had already recognised the ICC’s competence for dealing with highly serious human rights abuses. Such abuses took place during the army mutiny of 19 September 2002 which started Côte d’Ivoire’s decade-long crisis.

Abuses also occurred in the violent aftermath of the disputed presidential election of late 2010, which ended with the arrest of Gbagbo in April 2011.²⁰ The worst of the violence took place during those last five months; investigations are still ongoing and despite its future absence the ICC has promised “*tangible results*” in 2025.²¹ Notably, the timing of the ICC’s announcement, just one day before the actual day that Côte d’Ivoire’s worst post-independence crisis began can be seen as particularly insensitive.

¹⁶ RFI, 9 Sep 2024

¹⁷ Connection Ivoirienne, 12 Sep 2024

¹⁸ Connection Ivoirienne, 10 September 2024

¹⁹ Le Monde 20 Sep 2024

²⁰ ICC: situation in Côte d’Ivoire, accessed on 23 Sep 2024 through [icc-cpi.int](https://www.icc-cpi.int)

²¹ Le Monde 20 Sep 2024; Afrik.com, 19 Sep 2024

Human rights organisations have responded with alarm at the ICC's departure. **Confédération des organisations des victimes des crises ivoiriennes (Covici)** (confederation of organisations of victims of the Ivorian crises) president **Lacina Kanté** said the move is *"a bad message to the thousands of victims who feel abandoned."*²² Human rights organisations are also worried that the ICC's work is unfinished, alleging that its inquiries have concentrated on only one side of the conflict, with both Gbagbo and Blé Goudé having spent a decade in the ICC prison in **Scheveningen (The Netherlands)** before having all charges dropped against them, which included crimes against humanity (murder, rape and other inhumane acts). A third indictee, Ehivet, was never extradited to the ICC by the Ivorian authorities and charges against her were dropped in 2021.²³

There were and supposedly still are inquiries ongoing into atrocities committed by the side of the then-rebel leader **Guillaume Soro**, allied to Ouattara at the time, including the single worst event, the March 2011 massacre at **Duékoué** in which hundreds were killed. No one on the presidential side has ever faced prosecution and in 2018, Ouattara granted a pardon to hundreds of alleged perpetrators, which victims' organisations and human rights advocates alike consider illegal, given the gravity of the crimes and the fact that many details of the crimes committed remain hidden.²⁴

Human rights organisation's main worry is that given this level of impunity and absent a mitigating and even deterring agency like the ICC office, the kind of violence that marred the 2020 presidential election, in which more than 80 people died, could be repeated and amplified in 2025, especially when victims feel deprived of the requisite recognition and compensation for their losses and traumas. The government, on the other hand, sees no problem and regards the ICC's departure as a sign that *"its mission is over and we can be happy about this, [since] it shows that our own national jurisdictions have taken the place [of the ICC] and are working well"*.²⁵

Planner

2025 (**Côte d'Ivoire**) **African Development Bank (AfDB)** annual meetings
2025 (**Côte d'Ivoire**) Presidential elections

Chronology

21 Sep 2024 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Jeune Afrique*. Several opposition parties call for electoral reforms ahead of the 2025 presidential election, calling the election process a major source of conflict;

19 Sep 2024 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Fratmat*. Transport ministry announces it will suspend new port taxes, set to take effect this month after importers raised concerns;

16 Sep 2024 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Sika Finance*. **Canada**-headquartered **Thor Explorations** acquires a 100% interest in the **Guitry** gold exploration project from **Canada**-headquartered **Endeavour Mining**;

13 Sep 2024 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Agence Ecofin*. **Canada**-headquartered **Endeavour Mining** enters commercial production at its **Lafigué** gold mine;

9 Sep 2024 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Sika Finance*. **World Economic Forum's Tourism and Travel Development Index (TTDI)** reveals that Côte d'Ivoire is the second economy in the world to have made the most progress in terms of tourism and travel development between 2019 and 2024;

9 Sep 2024 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Sika Finance*. **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Bank for Investment and Development (BIDC)** signs a 13.12 billion FCFA (\$22.06m) loan agreement with **Mansa Bankto** to promote private sector development;

²² Le Monde 20 Sep 2024

²³ ICC: situation in Côte d'Ivoire, accessed on 23 Sep 2024 through icc-cpi.int

²⁴ Le Monde 20 Sep 2024; Afrik.com, 19 Sep 2024

²⁵ Le Monde 20 Sep 2024

8 Sep 2024 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *APA News*. The ruling **Rassemblement des houphouëtistes pour la démocratie et la paix (RHDP)** appoints **Laurent Tchagba** as its new coordinator who pledges to ensure President **Alassane Ouattara** is re-elected in the first round of the 2025 presidential elections;

7 Sep 2024 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Jeune Afrique*. Opposition **Front populaire ivoirien (FPI)** announces it will end its partnership with the ruling **Rassemblement des houphouëtistes pour la démocratie et la paix (RHDP)**, reached in May 2023, for national reconciliation, social cohesion and democracy, with FPI leader **Pascal Affi N'Guessan** calling the agreement "*detrimental, pointless and obsolete*";

4 Sep 2024 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *APA News*. **France** and Côte d'Ivoire hold a second joint air military manoeuvre;

2 Sep 2024 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Sika Finance*. Customs data indicate agricultural exports earned Côte d'Ivoire 4.2 trillion FCFA (\$7.08 billion) in 2023, of which cocoa contributed 47% or 2.01 trillion FCFA (\$3.38 billion);

29 Aug 2024 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Le Monde*. Five civil society organisations appeal to the **United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights** over a government order to regulate their activities;

27 Aug 2024 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Fratmat.info*. Foreign affairs minister **Léon Kacou Adom** takes part in the preparatory ministerial meeting ahead of the 9th **Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD)** during which it is also confirmed that a **Japan-Africa Public-Private Economic Forum** will be held in December in **Abidjan**;

27 Aug 2024 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Agence Ecofin*. **Australia's Turaco Gold** publishes an initial mineral resource estimate for its **Afema** project, indicating that three deposits hold 71.4 tonnes of gold;

26 Aug 2024 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Sika Finance*. Data from the telecommunications regulatory agency, **Autorité de Régulation des Télécommunications de Côte D'Ivoire (ARTCI)**, indicates the telecommunications sector generated 1.21 trillion FCFA (\$2.06 billion) in revenue in 2023;

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