

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

Côte d'Ivoire Monthly Briefing March 2025

Côte d'Ivoire Summary 28 March 2025

France confirms main opposition leader Tidiane Thiam's French nationality has been relieved at his request, allowing him to run in the upcoming elections. However, three opposition parties express either outrage or lack of surprise at the exclusion of their leaders from the electoral list. Farmgate prices for cocoa may reportedly increase slightly but the overall crop output will be poor, as it was in 2024. To help ensure maximum revenue, government claims it has contained Côte d'Ivoire's cocoa smuggling problem but this does not appear to be matched by reported facts. Mines, oil and energy minister Sangawofa Coulibaly embarks on a trade tour to the United State (US), securing several commitments to renew and/or further exploration for offshore oil.

Tidiane Thiam gives up French citizenship as voters register is released

Main opposition leader **Tidiane Thiam** of the **Parti démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI)** held a major rally in the **Saint-Denis** suburb of **Paris (France)** on 15 March, during which he touched on a wide variety of subjects, most notably corruption, the level of which he described as “*alarming*”.¹ Thiam alleged that he was the target of a campaign of “*elimination*”, adding that he was taking at least one of his detractors to court.² He also claimed that the ruling **Rassemblement des houphouëtistes pour la paix et la démocratie (RHDP)** was behind what he termed a campaign of lies, false accusations and politically motivated lawsuits, aimed at driving a wedge between him and the PDCI.³ The rally took place five days before the French authorities declared that Thiam has been ‘relieved’ of his French nationality, reportedly at his request.⁴ Per Ivorian law, a double nationality, which Thiam’s critics say he revealed late, would have prevented him from being a presidential candidate, an issue that was becoming a major campaign theme for his political adversaries.⁵

Thiam was nevertheless included in the provisional voter’s register, which the **Commission électorale indépendante (CEI)** released on 17 March. The CEI confirmed it had added 8.7 million new voters to the provisional electoral list but has remained steadfast in its refusal to have another revision of the list prior to the presidential election of October, as demanded by the opposition (*see ARC Briefing Côte d'Ivoire Feb 2025*). However, the CEI list also revealed exclusions which the opposition is arguing against.

Former president **Laurent Gbagbo**’s (2000-2011) **Parti des peuples africains – Côte d'Ivoire (PPA-CI)** expressed its anger over the exclusion of Gbagbo from the CEI’s provisional electoral list.⁶ The party’s executive president, **Sébastien Dano Djédjé**, told a press conference on 18 March:

“For us, today, the only thing that matters is the candidacy of president Laurent Gbagbo at the 2025 election, which he will win. We will do everything necessary for his inclusion in the electoral list as a candidate.”⁷

¹ L’Intelligent d’Abidjan, 17 Mar 2025

² L’Intelligent d’Abidjan, 17 Mar 2025

³ L’Inter, 17 Mar 2025

⁴ Reuters, 20 Mar 2025

⁵ L’Avenir, 10 Mar 2025 and 17 Mar 2025

⁶ L’Inter, 19 Mar 2025

⁷ L’Inter, 19 Mar 2025; Le Jour, 19 Mar 2025

Djédjé made a series of claims, including an old complaint that the CEI was partisan and that the list had excluded not only their candidate but also some three million voters. He insisted that the CEI should be dissolved, adding that the PPA-CI was preparing procedures to have President **Alassane Ouattara** (2010-present) removed from the electoral list.⁸

Other groups downplayed the exclusion of their leaders from the list. A spokesperson for **Génération et peuples solidaires (GSP)** of former rebel leader and ex-prime minister **Guillaume Soro** simply said that they were not surprised by his exclusion.⁹ The GPS is banned in Côte d'Ivoire and Soro lives in exile. Soro is presumed to be living in one of the three states of the **Alliance des États du Sahel** (alliance of the Sahel states), **Mali, Burkina Faso** or **Niger**, which is hostile to Côte, and particularly its president. Former youth minister under Gbagbo, **Charles Blé Goudé's** party **Congrès panafricain des jeunes et des patriotes (COJEP)** expressed similar terms but added that the electoral list was full of "*blatant irregularities*".¹⁰

RHDP meanwhile, continues its concerted campaign in favour of Ouattara, with former senate president **Jeannot Ahoussou Kouadio** telling a crowd in the country's interior that their vote should go to him.¹¹ Some reports suggest that the RHDP is planning its congress for May, when Ouattara will be officially declared the party candidate but there has been no official party statement to this effect.¹²

Conseil du Cacao Café may increase the farmgate price for cocoa

Coffee and cocoa regulatory body **Conseil du café cacao (CCC)** is reportedly planning to increase the state-guaranteed price paid to cocoa farmers by approximately 11% to between 2,000 CFA (\$3.29) and 2,500 CFA (\$4.11) per kg, up from 1,800 CFA (\$2.96).¹³ CCC itself has not made an announcement to this effect but anonymous sources have reported this to the media, adding that Ouattara gave the instruction as he would like the farmgate price set in line with the market.

The international market price is showing signs of easing and for the first time in four months, the international market price for cocoa dropped under \$8,000 per tonne.¹⁴ However, volatility will persist, as predictions for the rest of the harvesting season are very poor, the result of drought, followed by an erratic rainfall in the main cocoa cultivation regions.¹⁵ Agriculture minister **Kobenan Kouassi Adjoumani** told a news agency that the trend for 2025 was similar to that of last year, which triggered the exceptionally high international market prices in the first place.¹⁶

The government says it is also stepping up its actions against cocoa smuggling, seizing 14.5 tonnes of unprocessed cocoa that was on its way to **Guinea** on 21 February. It was the second successful seizure in February, followed by an announcement by customs at end February that another 84 tonnes has been seized in containers in an undisclosed location and a further 2,000 tonnes of undeclared cocoa in the **Port of Abidjan**.¹⁷ Interior and security minister **Vagondo Diomandé** has instructed all local authorities in border regions to step up border security before the second part of the harvesting season gets under way in April.

While reliable figures are not readily available, government claims that smuggling activities, which have been concentrating on Guinea and **Liberia** of late, cause severe damage to the Ivorian economy.¹⁸ One estimate is that in the last quarter in 2024 alone, as much as 75,000 tonnes of cocoa

⁸ L'Inter, 19 Mar 2025; Le Jour, 19 Mar 2025

⁹ L'Inter, 19 Mar 2025

¹⁰ RFI, 20 Mar 2025

¹¹ Le Mandat, 17 Mar 2025

¹² RFI, 20 Mar 2025

¹³ CNBC/Reuters, 19 Mar 2025

¹⁴ Le Jour, 19 Mar 2025

¹⁵ CNBC/Reuters, 19 Mar 2025

¹⁶ Reuters, 24 February 2025

¹⁷ Fraternité Matin, 27 Feb 2025; RFI, 28 Feb 2025; Reuters, 25 Feb 2025

¹⁸ Fraternité Matin, 27 Feb 2025

may have left the country illegally to Guinea and Liberia.¹⁹ Prices paid there for cocoa are reportedly up to three times higher than the farmgate price in Côte d'Ivoire itself and those involved in the traffic take their share. This may include civil, military, border and law enforcement authorities.²⁰ Should the smuggling estimates be correct, it means that as much as 15% of Côte d'Ivoire's estimated 1.7 million tonne cocoa output is taken out of the country illegally and that the widely publicised seizures by police, customs and the security forces so far have not had a significant impact, despite government's claims to the contrary.

Mines, oil and energy minister markets Côte d'Ivoire to the US

Mines, oil and energy **Mamadou Sangawofa Coulibaly** attended **CERAWeek 2025**, an annual conference in **Houston (United States)**, which brings together world leaders in energy production, distribution, technology and innovation on 11 and 12 March.²¹ Sangawofa Coulibaly noted ahead of the visit that it was aimed at attracting new investors to *"increase the movement of capital into a sector that has become strategic for our economy."*²²

Sangawofa Coulibaly participated in several panels, profiling the country as a destination of choice for investors. During the proceedings, he obtained at least one major result - **United Kingdom**-headquartered **BP** announced its return to Côte d'Ivoire after a ten-year absence. The company is set to start pre-exploration studies offshore, where major discoveries have been made recently.²³ Other announcements included that **Brazil's Petrobras** is interested in working with the state-owned **Petroci** on four offshore blocks and **Swiss-based Vitol** is interested in participating in the search for new oil fields.²⁴ Houston-based **Vaalco Energy**, which acquired its first offshore bloc on 3 March, said it was interested in four more blocs.²⁵

Sangawofa-Coulibaly attributed these announcements to growing international confidence in Côte d'Ivoire's energy potential. He added that major infrastructure and modernisation projects were being programmed in the ports of Abidjan and **San Pedro**, which would make it possible for the oil and gas to be received in those ports, stocked and exported. He was looking for both investors and technical expertise to get this done. He added that he envisaged a second oil refinery, able to process at least some of the oil that would come onstream.²⁶ Sangawofa-Coulibaly also held talks with his US counterpart **Chris Wright** and Houston city mayor **John Whitmire** to link CERAWeek with Côte d'Ivoire's own extractive trade fair, **Salon Internationale des Ressources Extractives et Energétiques (SIREXE)**. He ended his tour in **New York** to hold talks with several unnamed global actors in the mining and oil industries.²⁷

Planner

May 2025 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** African CEO Forum

Oct 2025 **(Côte d'Ivoire)** Presidential elections

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

2026 **(Côte d'Ivoire)** Second edition of **Salon Internationale des Ressources Extractives et Energétiques (SIREXE)** (international exhibition of extractive and energy resources)

Chronology

¹⁹ France24, 7 Mar 2025

²⁰ Le Monde, 4 Feb 2025

²¹ Compiled from the CERAWeek website, ceraweek.com

²² Fraternité Matin, 17 Mar 2025

²³ L'Essor ivoirien, 17 Mar 2025

²⁴ L'Essor ivoirien, 17 Mar 2025; economie-ivoirienne.ci, 25 Mar 2025

²⁵ L'Essor ivoirien, 17 Mar 2025; economie-ivoirienne.ci, 25 Mar 2025

²⁶ Fraternité Matin, 17 Mar 2025

²⁷ L'Essor ivoirien, 17 Mar 2025; Fraternité Matin, 17 Mar 2025

21 Mar 2025 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *AIP*. National assembly president **Adama Bictogo** and his **Liberian** counterpart **Richard Nagbe Koon** agree on a common border protection policy;

21 Mar 2025 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Jeune Afrique*. In the absence of **France's Air France**, national carrier **Air Côte d'Ivoire** and **Senegal's Air Senegal** have reportedly resolved to increase their flight frequencies to **Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso)**, **Niamey (Niger)** and **Conakry (Guinea)** where the French airline is no longer welcome;

20 Mar 2025 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Reuters*. **French** government confirms that **Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI)** leader **Tidjane Thiam** has been relieved of his French citizenship, allowing him to vie for the presidency in the October election;

19 Mar 2025 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *CNBC Africa*. **Coffee and Cocoa Council (CCC)** will reportedly increase the state-guaranteed price paid to its cocoa farmers by at least 11%, to between 2,000 FCFA (\$3.25) and 2,300 FCFA (\$3.85) per kg, ahead of the mid-crop season starting in April;

18 Mar 2025 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Reuters*. Exporters and pod counters say Côte d'Ivoire's cocoa mid-crop output is expected to drop by around 40% this season after an unusually long dry season and limited, patchy rainfall hit crops in the main production regions;

17 Mar 2025 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Punch*. **Côte d'Ivoire-Ghana Cocoa Initiative** expresses concern over the high level of poverty faced by cocoa farmers despite the two countries' farmers producing over 70% of the world's cocoa needs;

17 Mar 2025 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *RFI*. **Commission Électorale Indépendante (CEI)** announces nearly 8.7 million voters are on the provisional electoral roll which has been submitted to political parties, but the opposition continues to demand a revision of the lists;

14 Mar 2025 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Abidjan.net*. **European Union (EU)** launches a €7m (\$7.61m) programme in Abidjan to support the organisation of credible and peaceful presidential elections in October and legislative elections in 2026;

14 Mar 2025 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Bloomberg*. Top cocoa grower Côte d'Ivoire's upcoming mid-crop is expected to be smaller this year – about 400,000 tonnes versus 440,000 tonnes in 2024, following unfavourable weather, threatening to limit a recovery from a huge global shortage;

11 Mar 2025 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *RFI*. Côte d'Ivoire and **Ghana** reach an agreement to conduct regular joint inspections along their shared international maritime border;

10 Mar 2025 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Sika Finance*. Mines, petroleum and energy minister **Mamadou Sangafowa Coulibaly** embarks on a roadshow in the **United States (US)** to highlight mining and oil opportunities in Côte d'Ivoire;

10 Mar 2025 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Abidjan.net*. Several opposition parties form the **Coalition pour l'Alternance Pacifique (CAP-Côte d'Ivoire)** with **Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire-Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (PDCI-RDA)** leader **Tidjane Thiam** elected to lead the coalition;

5 Mar 2025 **Accra (Ghana)** *Modern Ghana*. President **John Mahama** embarks on a one-day working visit to **Côte d'Ivoire** to hold a meeting with his counterpart, **Alassane Ouattara**, to discuss strengthening ties between the two countries;

3 Mar 2025 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Mining.com*. Former **Groupement professionnel des miniers de Côte d'Ivoire (GPMCI)** (professional association of miners) president **Jean-Claude Diplo** says gold output is expected to hit a record high of 62 metric tonnes this year, boosted by increased production at the **Lafigue** gold mine;

1 Mar 2025 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Solar Quarter*. **Dubai-based AMEA Power** launches construction of a new 50MW **Bondoukou** solar photovoltaic power plant in Côte d'Ivoire;

26 Feb 2025 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Sika Finance*. Council of ministers approves new research permits for gold, nickel and copper to three companies, valid for four years;

25 Feb 2025 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Reuters*. Customs sources report that they have seized approximately 2,000 metric tonnes of falsely declared cocoa beans worth nearly \$19m at **Port of Abidjan**;

25 Feb 2025 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Reuters*. Agriculture minister **Kobenan Kouassi Adjoumani** says cocoa production in Côte d'Ivoire in the 2024/25 season is on course to remain around last season's disappointing level of about 1.76 million metric tonnes after adverse weather and crop conditions continued.

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