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President Alpha Condé (2010-present) swears in Mamady Youla as the prime minister of his Rassemblement du Peuple Guinéen (RPG) party government, taking over from Mohamed Saïd Fofana. Youla reduces the number of ministers from 35 to 31, with 16 new entrants. Amadou Bah Oury, vice president of the Union des Forces Démocratiques de Guinée (UFDG) opposition party, returns from five years in exile in France. Bah Oury alludes to his ambitions to lead the party, causing tension in the UFDG leadership. Guinea hosts the third Guinea-Morocco economic cooperation forum in 18 months, to consolidate major deals between the Guinean government and the Moroccan private sector. French billionaire Xavier Niel, through his investment vehicle NJJ Capital SAS, acquires a minority stake in Alliance Minière Responsable (AMR). Guinean security forces arrest Saleck Ould Cheikh, a member of Al-Qaïda du Maghreb Islamique (AQMI), who escaped from Nouakchott (Mauritania) central prison on 31 December.

Condé swears in new prime minister Mamady Youla...

President **Alpha Condé** (2010-present) swore in **Mamady Youla** as prime minister for the current presidential term from 2015 to 2020 on 29 December.¹ Condé secured re-election in October 2015 following a convincing, and well financed, election campaign which led his **Rassemblement du Peuple Guinéen (RPG)** to a first round victory (see *ARC Briefing Guinea October 2015*). Youla was an unexpected choice, though national opinion and opposition leaders recognise his technocratic experience.² **Cellou Dalein Diallo**, leader of the main opposition party, the **Union des Forces Démocratiques de Guinée (UFDG)**, praised his “*rigour*” and “*righteousness*”.³

Youla replaces **Mohamed Saïd Fofana**, who held the role from 2010-2015. When Fofana took on the role in 2010 from a senior economic civil servant position, he had little political experience and a low public profile.⁴ Fofana had the reputation of being discreet, pious, and loyal to Condé. He had little oratory or public rallying ability.⁵ Press sources called Fofana “*the most discreet prime minister Guinea has ever had*” and claimed that Condé did not want an ambitious prime minister who could potentially contest him during the 2015 presidential elections.⁶ Despite this, Fofana was methodical and controlling; he had a tight hold on domestic affairs, whilst Condé was geared towards international relations and affairs. This is a typical relationship between prime ministers and presidents in **Francophone Africa**.⁷ Fofana submitted his government’s resignation to Condé on 23 December.⁸

“This resignation of Fofana’s government made no sense. It was handed in through ignorance, unless the president asked him to resign to cover something, instead of revocation.”⁹

¹ Africa Guinée, 29 Dec 2015.

² Africa Guinée, 29 Dec 2015.

³ Jeune Afrique, 13 Jan 2016.

⁴ RFI, 25 Dec 2010.

⁵ Jeune Afrique, 28 Mar 2012.

⁶ Jeune Afrique, 28 Mar 2012.

⁷ Jeune Afrique, 28 Mar 2012.

⁸ Libre Opinion Guinée, 23 Dec 2015.

⁹ Source, public finance and law professor, Conakry

“In Guinea, the prime minister has no official power – he wields the power that the president grants him... his will to do well and capacity to act responsibly depend entirely on the president.”¹⁰

Press sources suggest that Fofana personally recommended Youla to Condé, claiming the two were childhood friends.¹¹ Unlike Fofana, Youla is not completely new to the Guinean political sphere, though his most recent experience is in private sector mining.¹² From 2004 to December 2015, Youla was the CEO of **Guinea Alumina Corporation (GAC)**, a joint venture to develop the **Sangarédi** aluminium refinery project. The partners are **United Arab Emirates (UAE)**-based aluminium and smelting company **Dubai Aluminium (DUBAL)** and **Mubadala Corporation**, a UAE government investment organisation.¹³ Fofana was also president of the **Chambre des Mines de Guinée** (Guinea chamber of mines) from 2012 to 2015, after being vice-president from 2009 to 2011.¹⁴ Prior to those roles, Youla was as an adviser to former prime minister **Lamine Sidimé**, as well as serving in the mining and energy ministries, all under former president **Lansana Conté** (1984-2008).¹⁵

Political analysts and press sources believe Youla’s private sector experience will lead him to focus on increased competitiveness of public institutions, and on improving relations with Guinea’s external economic partners.¹⁶ It remains unclear what kind of stance Youla will have with regard to corruption, when compared to his predecessor:

“[In principle] those who understand the state, don’t reason within personal interest, but rather with public interest. However, once we consider the state as a pie to be divided, things become more complicated. And the Guinean case is certainly one where the state is a dairy cow and each wants to fill their bucket.”¹⁷

... who reshuffles cabinet, reducing ministerial roles to 31

Youla announced the composition of his new government, which would be reduced to 31 ministers, on 4 January.¹⁸ In total, 16 new ministers entered Youla’s government.¹⁹ Seven of the 31 ministers are women.²⁰

- Agriculture minister: **Martha Jacqueline Sultan**;
- Animal produce minister: **Mohamed Tall**;
- Budget minister: **Dr Mohamed Lamine Doumbouya**, former adviser to the prime minister;
- Commerce minister: **Marc Yombouno**;
- Communications minister: **Rachid Ndiaye**, former adviser to the president;
- Culture and sport minister: **Siaka Barry**;
- Defense minister: **Mohamed Diane**, former state minister, and chief of staff;
- Digital economy minister: **Moustapha Diaby Mamy**, former CEO of the **Autorité de Régulation des Postes et Télécommunications (ARPT)**, Telecoms and post regulatory authority);
- Energy minister: **Cheick Sylla Taliby**;
- Environment and water minister: **Christine Sagno**;
- Finance minister: **Malado Kaba**, former director of **Africa Governance Initiative**;

¹⁰ Source, public finance and law professor, Conakry

¹¹ Actu Conakry, 27 Dec 2015.

¹² GuinéeTime, 26 Dec 2015.

¹³ GuinéeTime, 26 Dec 2015.

¹⁴ GuinéeTime, 26 Dec 2015.

¹⁵ GuinéeTime, 26 Dec 2015.

¹⁶ Guinée 7, 26 Dec 2015.

¹⁷ Source, public finance and law professor, Conakry

¹⁸ Jeune Afrique, 5 Jan 2016.

¹⁹ Jeune Afrique, 5 Jan 2016.

²⁰ Jeune Afrique, 5 Jan 2016.

- Foreign minister: **Makalé Camara**, former ambassador;
- Health minister: **Dr. Abdourahmane Diallo**;
- Higher education minister: **Yero Balde Abdoulaye**, former vice governor of **Banque Centrale de la République de Guinée (BCRG, Central bank of Guinea)**
- Hospitality, tourism and handcrafts minister: **Thierno Ousmane Diallo**, former livestock minister;
- Industry minister: **Boubacar Barry**;
- Justice minister: **Cheick Sako**;
- Maritime minister: **André Loua**;
- Mining minister: **Abdoulaye Magassouba**, former adviser to president;
- National unity minister: **Kalifa Gassama Diaby**, former human rights minister;
- Planning minister: **Kanny Diallo**, former economic adviser;
- Pre-university education minister: **Dr. Ibrahima Kourouma**;
- Public service minister: **Sekou Kourouma**;
- Public works minister: **Oumou Camara**;
- Security minister: **Abdul Kabele Camara**, former defense minister;
- Social affairs minister: **Sanaba Kaba**;
- Technical education minister and government spokesperson: **Albert Damantang Camara**;
- Territorial administration minister: **General Bouréma Condé**;
- Town planning minister: **Lousény Camara**;
- Transport minister: **Oye Guilavogui**, former ICT minister; and
- Youth minister: **Moustapha Naite**.²¹

However, several RPG members delivered an anonymous memorandum to President Condé claiming that ministers should be “legitimate” for them to be elected.²² The memorandum criticised Condé for marginalising the party’s management, as it claimed that out of the 33 new ministers, only four were ‘original’ RPG members.²³ The group demanded that Condé reinstate the replaced ministers.²⁴

“The president discretionarily names whoever he wants as minister. So, whoever he chooses is legitimate. This is the legal principle.”²⁵

Opposition vice president returns from exile, triggering tension in the UFDG

Amadou Bah Oury, vice president of the UFDG, returned to Guinea following five years in exile in **France** on 22 January.²⁶ In 2013, a court declared Bah Oury complicit in an attack and assassination attempt on Condé,²⁷ condemning him to five years in prison.²⁸ Bah Oury fled to France in exile, and the Guinean government issued an international arrest warrant for his crimes against state security.²⁹

Condé granted a presidential pardon to 171 prisoners, including Bah Oury – widely considered one of Condé’s fiercest opponents – on 24 December 2015.³⁰ However, the pardons did not include **Fatou Badiar Diallo** and **Commandant Alpha Oumar Diallo**, both condemned to life imprisonment for their implication in the 2011 attack on Condé’s residence, and both close to former president Conté.³¹

²¹ GuinéeNews, 4 Jan 2016.

²² Jeune Afrique, 18 Jan 2016.

²³ Jeune Afrique, 18 Jan 2016.

²⁴ Jeune Afrique, 18 Jan 2016.

²⁵ Source, public finance and law professor, Conakry

²⁶ RFI, 22 Jan 2016.

²⁷ Jeune Afrique, 3 Jul 2012.

²⁸ Jeune Afrique, 25 Dec 2015.

²⁹ Jeune Afrique, 3 Jul 2012.

³⁰ Jeune Afrique, 25 Dec 2015.

³¹ Jeune Afrique, 25 Dec 2015.

“The president... has the discretionary power to pardon any prisoner who has been tried and whose conviction was final. There is no possibility for recourse of this pardon.”³²

Two weeks after the presidential pardon, Bah Oury returned to Guinea. Upon his return, he met with Condé twice. Bah Oury stated publicly that since these meetings, he felt a sincere desire from Condé to undertake a meaningful process of national reconciliation in the country.³³

“I have a duty, to continue to work so that... Guinea can turn the page on this sad case, to impel a true process of political easing that can assure a greater political stability to our country... Guinea, unfortunately, has encountered long periods of political instability and social crises. We have an obligation to rise above this situation.”³⁴

Press sources speculate that Bah Oury’s return has increased tensions within the UFDG as they believe he might contest Diallo for leadership.³⁵ Another vice president of the UFDG, **Fodé Oussou Fofana**, confirmed that Bah Oury had a cool reception,

“If Mr. Bah Oury comes to continue the fight with us, we will roll out the carpet. However, if he comes to say that he will recover the UFDG, we will show him that the party does not belong to one person.”³⁶

Bah Oury does not deny the tensions within the party, hinting perhaps at his own ambitions,

“There are diversions, manifest rivalries... The tensions within the UFDG prove that the UFDG fundamentally needs renewal, a change in leadership.”³⁷

“There are three hypotheses: first, Diallo maintains his power and imposes his legitimacy as leader; second, the newcomer takes his place; third, the two form their own divisions.”³⁸

Conakry hosts Guinea-Morocco economic cooperation forum

Guinea hosted the third economic cooperation forum with **Morocco** in eighteen months.³⁹ During this period economic exchanges between the two countries grew by an average of 30%.⁴⁰ At the forum, the two countries signed more than 50 business and governments contracts.⁴¹ Private investment promotion agency, **Agence de Promotion des Investissements Privés (APIP-Guinée)**, and the **Confédération Générale des Entreprises au Maroc (CGEM)**, general confederation of Moroccan companies), organised the two-day event in the Guinean capital **Conakry** on 18 January.⁴²

“This encounter could be beneficial to both countries, though mostly for Guinea, which does not have an administrative body in Morocco. Despite this, I do remain slightly pessimistic as to the outcome of some of the signed agreements.”⁴³

In total 450 Guinean, and 135 Moroccan participants attended the event for business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-government (B2G) encounters.⁴⁴ **Gabriel Curtis**, CEO of APIP-Guinée, stated that he favoured B2G meetings, which he claimed would be necessary to overcome certain national obstacles.⁴⁵ APIP-Guinée were aiming for seven specific agreements to be signed.⁴⁶

³² Source, public finance and law professor, Conakry

³³ RFI, 22 Jan 2016.

³⁴ RFI, 22 Jan 2016.

³⁵ Multiple sources: Africa Guinée, 17 Jan 2016; GuinéeNews, 1 Jan 2016; GuinéeNews, 24 Jan 2016.

³⁶ Africa Guinée, 17 Jan 2016.

³⁷ RFI, 22 Jan 2016.

³⁸ Source, political scientist, Conakry

³⁹ RFI, 21 Jan 2016.

⁴⁰ RFI, 21 Jan 2016.

⁴¹ RFI, 21 Jan 2016.

⁴² Jeune Afrique, 19 Jan 2016.

⁴³ Source, economist, Conakry

⁴⁴ Jeune Afrique, 19 Jan 2016.

⁴⁵ Jeune Afrique, 19 Jan 2016.

Major B2G agreements were signed between central bank BCRG and Morocco-based **Attijariwafa Bank**; Guinean state power utility **Electricité de Guinée (EDG)** and Morocco-based **Groupe Banque Populaire (GBP)**; and between the **Port of Conakry** and Morocco-based cement producer **Ciments de l'Afrique (CIMAF)**.⁴⁷ The companies have yet to negotiate details of the deals, including their size.⁴⁸

One outstanding B2B deal concerns Guinean wheat producer **Sonoco**. Sonoco created a \$28.5m joint venture with Morocco-based **Moulins Lahlal** in 2012.⁴⁹ At the forum, Sonoco signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Morocco-based metallurgy products company **Longofer**.⁵⁰

French billionaire acquires minority stake in Alliance Minière Responsable

Xavier Niel acquired a minority stake in France-based **Alliance Minière Responsable (AMR)** on 27 January. AMR holds a bauxite exploration permit covering 295km in the north-western Guinean town of **Boké**.⁵¹ Through the acquisition of this stake, Niel becomes the largest single shareholder in AMR.⁵²

Niel, the billionaire founder of France-based **Iliad S.A.** and **Free** telecoms companies, acquired the stake through his personal investment vehicle, **NJJ Capital SAS**.⁵³ The sum of the investment remained confidential.⁵⁴ Niel joins two other major French investors – **Anne Lauvergeon**, former CEO of France-based energy and mining conglomerate **Areva**; and **Edouard Louis-Dreyfus**, former president of France-based naval equipment and transport group **Louis Dreyfus Armateurs** – who have invested in AMR since its launch in June 2015.⁵⁵

AMR estimates that the land that its exploration permit covers could contain bauxite deposits of up to 400 million tonnes, with an average of 43-46.6% alumina.⁵⁶

As **Thibault Launay**, AMR co-founder states,

*“Guinea, with around a third of world deposits, is the country in line to become the main provider of bauxite to **China**.”⁵⁷*

Some press sources claim that Guinea has as much as 50% of worldwide known reserves of bauxite.⁵⁸ Launay also believes that Condé's re-election and Youla's rise to the role of prime minister were instrumental in influencing Niel's decision.⁵⁹ Since initial deposit estimates in 1970, prospectors have revealed between 150-250 million tonnes of bauxite at Boké.⁶⁰ AMR aims to apply for the production licence in 2016 and start production in 2018. It will invest between \$80-120m to make the mine operational.⁶¹ Bauxite continues to remain largely unaffected by the global commodities price slump, staying above \$55 per tonne since 2014.⁶²

⁴⁶ Jeune Afrique, 19 Jan 2016.

⁴⁷ Le 360, 19 Jan 2016.

⁴⁸ Le 360, 19 Jan 2016.

⁴⁹ Les Afrique, 5 Jun 2012.

⁵⁰ Jeune Afrique, 19 Jan 2016.

⁵¹ Le Monde, 27 Jan 2016.

⁵² Bloomberg, 27 Jan 2016.

⁵³ Le Monde, 27 Jan 2016.

⁵⁴ Le Monde, 27 Jan 2016.

⁵⁵ Le Monde, 27 Jan 2016.

⁵⁶ Jeune Afrique, 27 Jan 2016.

⁵⁷ Le Monde, 27 Jan 2016.

⁵⁸ Jeune Afrique, 27 Jan 2016.

⁵⁹ Bloomberg, 27 Jan 2016.

⁶⁰ Le Monde, 27 Jan 2016.

⁶¹ Le Monde, 27 Jan 2016.

⁶² Jeune Afrique, 27 Jan 2016.

Security forces arrest escaped Mauritanian jihadist

Guinean defence and security forces arrested **Mauritanian** national **Saleck Ould Cheikh**, a jihadist member of **Al-Qaïda du Maghreb Islamique (AQMI)**, Al Qaeda of the Islamic Maghreb) in north western Guinea, near Boké.⁶³ The governor of Boké claimed that Cheikh fired at close range on the police commander of **Daby**.⁶⁴ Security forces arrested Cheikh and deported him back to Mauritania along with two **Guinea-Bissau** nationals.⁶⁵

“He should have been interrogated to understand why he chose to pass through Guinea, and his final destination... In fact he committed a crime, as he fired an arm at security forces. He should be tried for this in Guinea.”⁶⁶

The Mauritanian government sentenced Cheikh to the death penalty in 2011. A court convicted him of involvement in a car bombing aiming to assassinate Mauritanian president **Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz** (2009-present).⁶⁷ Cheikh escaped from **Nouakchott** (Mauritania) central prison on 31 December and had been on the run for the three ensuing weeks, passing through **Senegal** and Guinea-Bissau before his arrest in Guinea.⁶⁸

“West African countries are highly exposed to terrorism, as they do not adequately control their borders.”⁶⁹

Implications

Youla’s relatively limited political profile may initially appear as a continuation of Condé wanting a prime minister who will not contest his leadership. However, Youla’s reputation in business and the mining sector in particular reflect favourably on his potential to go beyond that label, as he aims to uphold his promises of economic dynamism and foreign business ties. His technocratic traits appear to be a welcome change after Fofana, garnering bi-partisan support from RPG and opposition members alike. Therefore, he could potentially be a credible successor to Condé in the 2020 elections.

Youla’s new government seems to be a firm commitment from Condé to modernise and update the RPG. The president has acted without fear of a backlash. The anonymous memorandum shows a certain reluctance within his own party to adhere to the change, despite a satisfying re-election. The tensions within the UFDG following Bah Oury’s return to Guinea, shed light onto a party in crisis, with increasing internal divisions after their loss during the October 2015 elections. Condé’s presidential pardon serves as an example of his desire for social coherence, with an observable commitment to political reconciliation.

The Guinea-Morocco forum is a paragon of increasing South-South cooperation on the continent, as **King Mohamed VI** (1999-present) seeks to expand his country’s reach. In this case, Guinea will benefit greatly from much-needed investment in major public projects. The Alliance Minière Responsable is seemingly highly related to Condé’s re-election and Youla’s appointment. These two examples will more effectively communicate the continuation of Condé’s business friendly stance on an international level.

Security measures in many West African countries have significantly increased since the bombings in **Ouagadougou** on 15 January. However, the arrest of Cheikh is an example of how coordinated regional efforts could help considerably to avoid more terrorist attacks in the region. Cheikh was able to cross three borders unnoticed after his escape from prison.

⁶³ Jeune Afrique, 21 Jan 2016.

⁶⁴ Jeune Afrique, 21 Jan 2016.

⁶⁵ Jeune Afrique, 21 Jan 2016.

⁶⁶ Source, public finance and law professor, Conakry

⁶⁷ Jeune Afrique, 2 Jan 2016.

⁶⁸ Jeune Afrique, 21 Jan 2016.

⁶⁹ Source, public finance and law professor, Conakry

About Africa Risk Consulting:

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