

## AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

### Gabon Monthly Briefing May 2024

---

#### Gabon Summary 10 May 2024

*The Dialogue national inclusif (DNI) (inclusive national dialogue) process concludes on 28 April, with several proposals made to be included in the new constitution, including suspending all political parties and barring leaders from the former ruling Parti démocratique gabonais (PDG) from the upcoming election. Assemblée nationale de la Transition (national assembly of the transition) head Jean-François Ndongou and opposition leader and former African Union (AU) Commission president Jean Ping arrive in Luanda (Angola) on 23 April to meet with Angolan authorities, reportedly to calm tensions. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) reveals in its latest monthly oil market report that Gabon's oil production reached 230,000 barrels per day (bpd) during March, its highest level since March 2020.*

---

#### National dialogue concludes

The **Dialogue national inclusif (DNI)** (inclusive national dialogue) process concluded on 28 April after launching on 2 April. The DNI marked the first step in the transitional government's roadmap for a return to constitutional rule. Archbishop **Jean-Patrick Iba-Ba** led the process alongside 28 military officials, clerics, traditional rulers and civil society and opposition leaders who are serving as dialogue officials.<sup>1</sup> In total, 680 people took part in the dialogue process, representing these areas of society; however, they were appointed by transitional president General **Brice Clotaire Oligui Nguema** (2023-present), raising questions about their impartiality and whether they are a true reflection of these areas of society (see *ARC Briefing Gabon Apr 2024*).

Approximately 30,000 proposals were submitted and discussed during the dialogue process, covering topics from presidential terms to advocating for better funding of the health sector.<sup>2</sup> DNI spokesperson **Jean Bernard Asseko Mve** said on state television on 24 April that many of the participants were focused on why Gabon has remained a poor country despite its abundance of natural and mineral wealth, particularly oil.<sup>3</sup>

A final report with the main proposals was submitted to Nguema on 30 April during an official closing ceremony at the presidential palace.<sup>4</sup> Some of the key proposals include:

- Suspending all legally recognised political parties pending the establishment of new rules governing political parties;
- Suspending the former ruling **Parti démocratique gabonais (PDG)** and allied parties for three years with immediate effect;
- Launching investigations against PDG leaders;
- Barring PDG leaders from standing in the next presidential, legislative and local elections;
- Maintaining the two-year transitional period back to democratic rule, although an extension of 12 months would be deemed acceptable in case of a crisis or unforeseen circumstances;
- Removal of the single ballot – a source of contention in the 2023 elections;
- Moving Gabon from a semi-presidential to a presidential system, with a directly elected president presiding over the executive branch which would have separate powers from the legislative and judicial branches;

---

<sup>1</sup> VOA News, 2 Apr 2024

<sup>2</sup> Africanews, 29 Apr 2024

<sup>3</sup> VOA News, 24 Apr 2024

<sup>4</sup> AFP, 30 Apr 2024

- A seven-year presidential mandate, renewable once.<sup>5</sup>

The first proposal would see the suspension of nearly 200 political parties. Those in favour of the recommendation say it will eliminate parties created for corruption and personal ego while opposition leaders have said the move would stifle democracy in Gabon.<sup>6</sup> Preventing the main members of the PDG from running would also exclude political heavyweights including former prime ministers **Alain-Claude Bilie-By-Nze** and **Paul Biyoghe Mba**.<sup>7</sup> Notably, no recommendation was made that would bar Nguema from running in the upcoming election, which, if the timeline is followed, will happen in August 2025. The proposals are non-binding and given that Nguema appointed the participants, the process does not necessarily accurately reflect what opposition parties and civil society want in the new era of Gabonese politics. However, during the closing ceremony, Nguema expressed his satisfaction with the DNI and committed to following the next steps necessary, namely around drafting a constitution as soon as possible.<sup>8</sup>

Nguema appointed 21 people on 8 May to form the **Comité constitutionnel national (CCN)** (national constitutional committee), led by institutional reform minister **Murielle Minkoué Mintsá**.<sup>9</sup> Defence minister General **Brigitte Onkanowa** and justice minister **Paul Marie Gondjout** are also on the committee, alongside a mix of opposition leaders, legal representatives and religious leaders. Mintsá will cease her duties as minister to lead the committee, which may result in a minor cabinet reshuffle in the coming months. The constitution is expected to be submitted to parliament in June and the referendum held in November.

### Tensions with Angola simmer down

**Assemblée nationale de la Transition** (national assembly of the transition) head **Jean-François Ndongou** and opposition leader and former **African Union (AU) Commission** president **Jean Ping** arrived in **Luanda (Angola)** on 23 April led a delegation appointed by Nguema to meet with Angolan authorities. The visit came against a background of tensions between the two countries, with speculation rife that the visit was intended to calm these tensions, especially with the addition of Ping to the delegation. Ping's chief of staff at the AU Commission was Angola's current foreign affairs minister, **Antonio Tete**.<sup>10</sup>

In January, Angola's foreign affairs ministry reported that a "*serious diplomatic incident*" had taken place at the home of **Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)** president **Gilberto da Piedade Verissimo** in Gabon's capital, **Libreville**, on 17 January. According to the Angolan ministry, five armed men broke into Verissimo's official residence and "*psychologically assaulted*" him and his assistant, adding that some of the intruders were wearing Gabonese armed forces uniforms.<sup>11</sup> The interior ministry responded on 19 January, confirming that an investigation had been opened and called the incident regrettable. ECCAS suspended Gabon after the August 2023 coup and decided during its summit on 15 December that it would maintain the suspension and as well as regional sanctions imposed on Gabon until a return to constitutional rule. Following the summit, Gabon recalled its ambassador to Angola, **Lizeth Pena Satumbo**, for consultations and she did not return to her functions until the delegation had arrived in Gabon.<sup>12</sup>

Ping and Ndongou met with Angola's President **João Lourenço** (2017-present) after which Satumbo resumed her post as ambassador. Satumbo told the press on 26 April that Lourenço had requested the visit of the delegation and that the meeting made it possible to "*put things back on track*".<sup>13</sup> There are

<sup>5</sup> AFP, 30 Apr 2024

<sup>6</sup> VOA News, 30 Apr 2024 ; Le Nouveau Gabon, 2 May 2024

<sup>7</sup> Jeune Afrique, 29 Apr 2024

<sup>8</sup> Gabon Review, 30 Apr 2024

<sup>9</sup> APA News, 8 May 2024

<sup>10</sup> Gabon Review, 24 Apr 2024

<sup>11</sup> The Africa Report, 29 Jan 2024

<sup>12</sup> Gabon Media Time, 24 Apr 2024

<sup>13</sup> Gabon Review, 26 Apr 2024

reportedly now plans for Nguema to make the trip himself, which may indicate that ECCAS is considering lifting sanctions on Gabon.

### Oil production reaches highest level since 2020

The **Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)** indicated in its latest monthly oil market report that Gabon's oil production reached 230,000 barrels per day (bpd) during March, its highest level since March 2020. In 2023, Gabon averaged 203,000 bpd but has shown stronger performance in 2024, producing 208,000 bpd in January, 215,000 bpd in February and finally 230,000 bpd in March.<sup>14</sup> OPEC added that this is a "*significant*" annual growth rate of 16.8%, forecasting that this, together with the increase in oil prices since the start of 2024, should help the economy.<sup>15</sup>

Oil remains a key sector for Gabon, making up approximately 50% of GDP. On 30 April, the **Direction générale des douanes et des droits indirects (DGDDI)** (general directorate of customs and indirect duties) reported that Gabon's crude oil exports reached 3.99 trillion FCFA (\$6.52 billion) in 2023. Oil accounted for 67% of the country's exports, with **China** remaining Gabon's top export market for oil, importing \$2 billion worth of oil in 2023.<sup>16</sup> Gabon's oil exports were nearly double non-oil exports, which stood at 1.94 trillion FCFA (\$3.18 billion) in 2023.<sup>17</sup>

However, Gabon expects oil revenues to gradually decline over the next few years due to a drop in crude prices and a decline in oil production.<sup>18</sup> In fact, when issuing a bond in March, data indicated that the government forecasts up to a 35% drop in revenues between 2023 and 2026, reducing the importance of Gabon diversifying its economy away from oil despite the recent increase in output.

---

<sup>14</sup> OPEC, Apr 2024; Gabon Media Time, 9 May 2024

<sup>15</sup> Gabon Media Time, 9 May 2024

<sup>16</sup> Gabon Media Time, 15 Apr 2024

<sup>17</sup> These figures do not represent government revenue, just total exports.

<sup>18</sup> Le Nouveau Gabon, 26 Mar 2024

## Planner

2024 **(Gabon)** General census

28 – 29 May 2024 **Paris (France)** Gabon-France economic forum

Jun 2024 **(Gabon)** Transitional president General **Brice Clotaire Oligui Nguema** to visit **Paris (France)**

Jun 2024 **(Gabon)** New constitution expected to be submitted to parliament

Nov 2024 **(Gabon)** Expected referendum on new constitution

Mar 2025 **(Gabon)** Expected adoption of a new electoral code

Aug 2025 **(Gabon)** General elections

## Chronology

8 May 2024 **Paris (France)** *Gabon Review*. **Gabon's** prime minister, **Raymond Ndong Sima**, attends the 3<sup>rd</sup> **Europe-Africa Forum**, asking for a 'win-win' relationship between **Europe** and **Africa** as well as Gabon and France;

3 May 2024 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Gabon Media Time*. Transitional president **Brice Clotaire Nguema** meets with **Nigeria's** defence minister, **Bello Mohammed Matawelle**, to discuss bolstering security cooperation;

30 Apr 2024 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Offshore Energy*. **Norway**-headquartered **BW Energy** sells its offshore production facility for \$150m, freeing up a net \$110m of liquidity to continue developing projects in Gabon;

30 Apr 2024 **Libreville (Gabon)** *DGDDI*. **Direction générale des douanes et des droits indirects (DGDDI)** (general directorate of customs and indirect duties) reports that crude oil exports totalled 3.99 trillion FCFA (\$6.54 billion) in 2023, representing 67% of the country's total export volume;

29 Apr 2024 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Gabon Review*. Prime minister **Raymond Ndong Sima** has a working session with representatives of the **Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI)** who note that Gabon's next report will be released in July;

28 Apr 2024 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Gabon Media Time*. **World Bank** and Gabon sign a financing agreement for the population census set to take place this year;

26 Apr 2024 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Direct Infos Gabon*. **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** forecasts that Gabon's economic growth will reach 2.9% in 2024, up from 2.3% in 2023;

25 Apr 2024 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Le Nouveau Gabon*. Economy ministry announces that manganese production fell by 2.5% in 2023 despite initial forecasts of an increase of 9.5%;

24 Apr 2024 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Direct Infos Gabon*. A delegation of business leaders concludes a two-day visit to **Rwanda** to explore trade and investment opportunities;

24 Apr 2024 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Gabon Review*. A delegation from the **Commonwealth Enterprise** visits the **Nkok Special Investment Zone**;

22 Apr 2024 **Libreville (Gabon)** *AFP*. A **Paris (France)** criminal court finds former president **Omar Bongo's** daughter, **Pascaline Bongo**, not guilty of accepting bribes to help secure public contracts in Gabon;

19 Apr 2024 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Gabon Review*. Justice minister **Paul-Marie Gondjout** launches a project aimed at strengthening maritime security and the rule of law in the **Gulf of Guinea**, funded by **Japan**;

18 Apr 2024 **Libreville (Gabon) *Le Nouveau Gabon*. France-headquartered Maurel & Prom** announces it invested \$107m in developing its activity in Gabon in 2023, up from \$92m in 2022;

### About Africa Risk Consulting:

**Africa Risk Consulting (ARC)** is a pan-African consulting company that provides timely, relevant information and advice that enables its clients to take informed investment decisions and to safeguard their reputations.

**ARC's** core consulting services include integrity due diligence and corporate investigations, political advisory and country assessments, opportunity monitoring and reputation risk management. Most relevant to private equity firms is ARC's integrity due diligence and corporate investigations capability. Specifically, ARC offers pre-deal integrity checks to highlight red flags before negotiations start; full detailed multi-jurisdictional reputation due diligence; and supplier and senior hire vetting and repeat due diligence for compliance programmes. ARC is unique in that it offers a 10-day delivery for a routine integrity due diligence. ARC also offers a suite of corporate investigations services from immediate investigation, evidence gathering, e-discovery, forensic accounting and whistleblower support on one end to crisis media management and regular monitoring on the other.

[www.africariskconsulting.com](http://www.africariskconsulting.com)

### About ARC Briefing:

**ARC Briefing** is ARC's essential business information service.

Companies at any stage in their Africa expansion, whether building or communicating an Africa strategy, investing directly, expanding current operations, financing other investors, doing the legal leg-work or researching the Africa growth trend, need ARC Briefing.

**ARC Briefing** is an information service keeping you:

- Up to date with Country Chronologies of business-critical events
- In the know via Country Briefings on political, economic, business and operating trends. Written in-country, ARC experts analyse and comment
- Ahead with Country Planner which details future elections, budgets, regulatory changes etc.

[www.africariskconsulting.com](http://www.africariskconsulting.com)

### Getting in touch

Please contact us by email [info@africariskconsulting.com](mailto:info@africariskconsulting.com) or call + 44 (0) 20 7078 4080

Follow us on Twitter: [@ARCBriefing](https://twitter.com/ARCBriefing)

**Africa Risk Consulting (ARC) Pty Ltd** expressly forbids the collection of information and content from ARC Briefing as data to train generative artificial intelligence models.

© Africa Risk Consulting (ARC)