

**AFRICA RISK CONSULTING****South Africa Monthly Briefing December 2021****South Africa Summary 21 December 2021**

*South Africa counts the cost of the July insurrection attempt as the economy contracts by 1.5% in the third quarter compared with the second quarter. Despite the third quarter contraction, the economy grows by 5.8% year-on-year in the first nine months of 2021, the best nine-month growth since the 1960s. The official unemployment rate rises to a record 34.9% in the third quarter of 2021 from 34.4% in the second quarter. Independent non-partisan think tank The Helen Suzman Foundation and opposition party Democratic Alliance apply to the Gauteng High Court to have former President Jacob Zuma's (2009-2018) medical parole overturned. The court rules in their favour on 15 December, but an appeal against this judgement is heard on 21 December. President Cyril Ramaphosa (2018-present) undertakes a four-nation West African tour to Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Senegal. A South African scientist identifies the Omicron variant of the coronavirus from a sample taken in Botswana, prompting a ban by several countries around the world on flights from several Southern African countries. Early data shows that although the Omicron variant is highly infectious, it causes less severe symptoms than the Delta variant. President Ramaphosa and minerals minister Gwede Mantashe have both tested positive for Covid despite being fully vaccinated against the disease. The government may tighten lockdown restrictions ahead of the year-end holidays as it extends the State of Disaster by another month to 15 January, as daily case numbers reach a record high on 12 December.*

**July violence results in third quarter contraction ...**

South Africa's economy contracted by 1.5% in the third quarter of 2021 when compared with the second quarter, as the July insurrection attempt severely disrupted supply chains and caused damage estimated at R500 billion (\$31.65 billion) (see *ARC Briefing South Africa July 2021*).<sup>1</sup> Only four of South Africa's ten economic sectors managed a positive quarterly change. The strongest performer was the financial services sector, with a 1.2% gain. This was followed by personal services (0.5%), government services (0.4%) and electricity, gas and water (0.4%), demonstrating the general resilience of the service sector, given that a substantial part of these services has moved into the digital space.

Sectors dependent on an efficient supply chain suffered the most. Agriculture, with its numerous forward and backward linkages, was the worst affected and contracted by 13.6%.<sup>2</sup> Internal trade, including retail, wholesale and accommodation, declined by 5.5%, in part due to a 4.2% drop in manufacturing resulting in fewer products available. Transport and storage services required to move goods between manufacturer and retailer were also reduced, in this case by 2.2%. Mining was less affected as this activity largely takes place in rural areas, so this sector suffered only a 0.9% loss. The construction sector, significantly hollowed out by the past 18 months of lockdown, only dropped by 0.5%.

The fourth quarter will be impacted by the three-week strike in October in the manufacturing sector, while the tourism sector will see a decline as the new **Omicron** coronavirus variant has seen foreign governments impose flight bans, and large events such as the traditional "rages" in **Ballito (Kwa-ZuluNatal)** and **Plettenberg Bay (Western Cape)** have been cancelled (see below). Economists are concerned as to how these events will impact the full-year growth forecast and prospects for 2022.

<sup>1</sup> Statistics South Africa, 7 Dec 2021

<sup>2</sup> Statistics South Africa, 7 Dec 2021

Most economists do not expect growth to exceed 2% in the next two to three years amid Covid-19-induced uncertainty.

The third-quarter contraction resulted in the unemployment rate rising to a record 34.9% in the third quarter, from 34.4% in the second quarter. Despite the third-quarter contraction, the economy grew by 5.8% year-on-year in the first nine months. This nine-month growth is the strongest since the 1960s, which prompts **United States**-headquartered credit rating agency **Fitch Ratings** to change its outlook for South Africa from negative to stable on 17 December:

*"The revision of the Outlook to Stable reflects the faster than expected economic recovery, the surprisingly strong fiscal performance this year and significant improvements to key GDP-based credit metrics following the re-basing of national accounts."*<sup>3</sup>

### ... as Zuma's medical parole hangs in the balance

The opposition **Democratic Alliance** party and non-partisan think tank **Helen Suzman Foundation** successfully applied to the **Gauteng High Court** on 15 December to have former president **Jacob Zuma's** (2009-2018) medical parole rescinded.<sup>4</sup> Correctional services commissioner **Arthur Fraser** granted Zuma medical parole on 5 September after he had completed only two months of his 15-month sentence for contempt of the **Constitutional Court** in failing to testify before the **Zondo Commission of Inquiry into State Capture** (see *ARC Briefing South Africa September 2021*). However, Gauteng High Court Justice **Elias Matojane** ruled on 15 December that Zuma's medical parole be revoked immediately and that he be returned to the custody of **Correctional Services** to serve out the remainder of his sentence for contempt of court.<sup>5</sup> Matojane held that Fraser had unlawfully mitigated the punishment imposed by the Constitutional Court, rendering the constitutional order ineffective and undermining respect for the courts, the rule of law and the constitution itself:

*"The consequential relief sought ... will not impact him unfairly, as there is no suggestion that he is an innocent party. The Third respondent [President Zuma] defied the Zondo Commission, the judiciary and the rule of law and is resolute in his refusal to participate in the Commission's proceedings."*<sup>6</sup>

Zuma appealed the decision and on 21 December was given leave to appeal to the **Supreme Court of Appeal**.<sup>7</sup> Matojane said he was of the view that another court may come to a different decision on the ruling that the time Zuma served on medical parole should not be counted as part of his sentence. Matojane also stated that another court may find that Zuma should be treated with compassion and humanity – "*the essence of ubuntu*"<sup>8</sup> – because of his ill health and advanced age and so should not be returned to jail. At 79, Zuma has managed to avoid having his day in court since 2007, but his corruption trial is ready to resume in April.

Others facing corruption charges may not be able to use the state machinery as Zuma did during his years in power and are likely to have their chance to demonstrate their innocence in court as the final report of the Zondo Commission is due to be delivered on 1 January. Minister in the Presidency **Mondli Gungubele** said on 15 December that 120 corruption cases were before the High Court and the **Special Tribunal**, and that, as of March 2021, R42 billion (\$2.66 billion) in pension benefits and bank accounts had been frozen.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Fitch Ratings, 15 Dec 2021

<sup>4</sup> The Judiciary, 15 Dec 2021

<sup>5</sup> The Judiciary, 15 Dec 2021

<sup>6</sup> The Judiciary, 15 Dec 2021

<sup>7</sup> The Judiciary, 21 Dec 2021

<sup>8</sup> Ubuntu is defined as "*a quality that includes the essential human virtues of compassion and humanity*".

<sup>9</sup> Pretoria News, 15 Dec 2021

Police minister **Bheki Cele** said on 16 December that the police and law enforcement agencies were prepared to quell any unrest following the ruling that former Zuma's release on medical parole is unlawful.<sup>10</sup>

### President Ramaphosa pivots to West Africa

President **Cyril Ramaphosa** (2018-present) made an historic state visit to four **West African** countries from 30 November-7 December.<sup>11</sup> The visit to **Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Senegal** aimed to build trade ties between South Africa and these countries. Headlines over Ramaphosa's defiance against travel bans by countries outside **Africa** over the new Omicron Covid-19 variant topped his visit. Ramaphosa, whose detractors back home often criticise him for being too close to big businesses with ties to the West, flexed his muscles against countries which he had, until now, considered as "*partners*", over their continued opposition to an intellectual property waiver on vaccine manufacture.

Ramaphosa's four-nation tour kicked off in Nigeria where he met President **Muhammadu Buhari** (2015-present).<sup>12</sup> The state visit to Nigeria coincided with the 10th session of the **Nigeria-South Africa Bi-National Commission (BNC)**, the highest structured bilateral mechanism between Nigeria and South Africa. Trade between Nigeria and South Africa in 2020 totalled R42 billion (\$2.66 billion), but the countries aim to push it back up to R60 billion (\$3.8 billion) where it was headed in 2019 before the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>13</sup> South Africa's imports from Nigeria far exceed the value of its exports due to the oil it buys from that country. More than 48 South African companies invest in Nigeria, with the **MTN Group, Remgro, Pick n Pay Holdings, Black Rhino, the Protea Group and Naspers** the most significant.

The second leg of Ramaphosa's tour on 2-3 December encompassed an historic first visit by a South African head of state to Côte d'Ivoire.<sup>14</sup> The state visit resulted in the signing of nine cooperation agreements between the two countries in the domains of defence, agriculture, bilateral air services, youth matters, and economic and technical cooperation in the fields of energy, geology, mines and metallurgy amongst others.<sup>15</sup> Côte d'Ivoire is South Africa's third-largest trade partner in West Africa.<sup>16</sup> Ramaphosa was made an honorary citizen of the **District Autonome d'Abidjan** (Abidjan autonomous district) on 2 December, given the keys to the city<sup>17</sup> and granted the traditional title of "*Dwasho*" or "*The Great Warrior*".<sup>18</sup>

Ramaphosa and Côte d'Ivoire's President **Alassane Ouattara** (2010-present) committed to work together on multilateral and global issues of mutual concern including **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)** reform.<sup>19</sup> Ramaphosa lauded the increasing profile of South African companies operating in Côte d'Ivoire, notably telecommunications giant **Mobile Telephone Network (MTN)** and **Standard Bank**.<sup>20</sup> Ramaphosa said future South African investment would prioritise projects outlined in Côte d'Ivoire's near-term economic development agenda, the **Plan National de Développement (PND)** and urged Ivorian entrepreneurs to prospect opportunities in South Africa.<sup>21</sup> Both parties agreed to organise annual consultations to coordinate their positions on international politics.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>10</sup> News24, 16 Dec 2021

<sup>11</sup> SABC News, 30 Nov 2021

<sup>12</sup> Sanews.gov.za, 2 Dec 2021

<sup>13</sup> SABC News, 30 Nov 2021

<sup>14</sup> Sanews.gov.za, 2 Dec 2021

<sup>15</sup> Sanews.gov.za, 2 Dec 2021

<sup>16</sup> Daily Maverick, 15 Dec 2021

<sup>17</sup> News24, 2 Dec 2021

<sup>18</sup> EWN, 3 Dec 2021

<sup>19</sup> Sanews.gov.za, 2 Dec 2021

<sup>20</sup> News24, 2 Dec 2021

<sup>21</sup> Sanews.gov.za, 2 Dec 2021

<sup>22</sup> Financial Afrik, 3 Dec 2021

The audience between Ramaphosa and Ouattara was followed by the **Côte d’Ivoire-South Africa Economic Forum** from 2-3 December.<sup>23</sup> The forum saw the participation of 633 people, including 100 from South Africa. The two delegations formulated 11 recommendations including the establishment of a legal framework for cooperation, private sector diversification, encouraging business relations and supporting the consolidation of regional national champions.<sup>24</sup>

Bilateral trade between Côte d’Ivoire and South Africa stood at 260 billion FCFA (\$446.6m) in 2018 and improved to 370 billion FCFA (\$635.6m) in 2020. However, Ramaphosa stated that the two countries can do better, describing Côte d’Ivoire as a country that “*knows where it is going*” and has “*a clear vision*”.<sup>25</sup>

Ramaphosa’s visit to Côte d’Ivoire concluded with the laying of the foundation stone for **MTN Côte d’Ivoire’s** new headquarters.<sup>26</sup> The 20 billion FCFA (\$34.3m) investment is located at the **Akwaba Business Park** in the Abidjan commune of **Port-Bouët**, near the **Aéroport international Félix Houphouët-Boigny**. **MTN Group** chairman and former South African deputy finance minister **Jonas Mcebisi** attended the event with Ramaphosa.

Ghana was next on Ramaphosa’s itinerary, from 4-5 December, where he was hosted by President **Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo Addo** (2017-present).<sup>27</sup> Bilateral relations between South Africa and Ghana have grown significantly over the years, underlined by the elevation of structured bilateral relations from a **Permanent Joint Commission for Cooperation (PJCC)** to a **Bi-National Commission**, to be chaired by the heads of state. Ramaphosa planted a tree in the **Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park** in **Accra** near where South Africa’s later former president, **Nelson Mandela** (1994-1999), planted a mango tree just over 30 years ago.<sup>28</sup>

The final stop was Senegal, from 6-7 December, where Ramaphosa participated in the **Dakar Peace and Security Forum** and accepted an honorary doctorate from the **Cheikh Anta Diop University**, which granted Mandela his honorary doctorate 29 years ago.<sup>29</sup>

South Africa-based **Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies (TIPS)** economist **Itumeleng Mokoena**, says Ramaphosa’s administration appears to have a renewed interest in advancing trade and investment under AfCFTA, which became operational on 1 January 2021.<sup>30</sup> Ramaphosa’s economic diplomacy initiative in Côte d’Ivoire will benefit both countries particularly with regard to accelerating economic recovery.<sup>31</sup> While Ramaphosa’s visit was primarily aimed at creating new opportunities, consolidating existing markets and improving the ease of doing business for South African companies, it is also likely to accelerate the application of AfCFTA.<sup>32</sup>

### WHO honours South African scientist ...

The **World Health Organization (WHO)** has nominated **University of Pretoria** researcher Professor **Marietjie Venter** to chair its **Scientific Advisory Group for the Origins (SAGO) of Novel Pathogens**.<sup>33</sup> The appointment recognises the valuable contribution made by South African scientists to understanding the origin of diseases such as Covid-19. Venter is head of the Zoonotic Arbo and Respiratory Virus Programme at the Centre for Viral Zoonoses in the Department of Medical Virology at the University of Pretoria, and the only South African represented in SAGO. The group consists of a wide range of experts from across the world, working for free and in their individual capacities, to

<sup>23</sup> APA, 4 Dec 2021

<sup>24</sup> APA, 4 Dec 2021

<sup>25</sup> RFI, 3 Dec 2021

<sup>26</sup> Financial Afrik, 3 Dec 2021

<sup>27</sup> Sanews.gov.za, 2 Dec 2021

<sup>28</sup> Daily Maverick, 15 Dec 2021

<sup>29</sup> Daily Maverick, 15 Dec 2021

<sup>30</sup> Daily Maverick, 15 Dec 2021

<sup>31</sup> Daily Maverick, 15 Dec 2021

<sup>32</sup> Daily Maverick, 15 Dec 2021

<sup>33</sup> News24, 9 Dec 2021

probe the origins of diseases such as Covid-19 and advise the WHO on a global framework to study the origins of "*emerging and re-emerging pathogens of epidemic and pandemic potential*". They will also work to understand the origins of **SARS-CoV-2**, the virus that causes Covid-19.

The **B.1.1.529** variant, now called Omicron, was first reported to the WHO from South Africa on 24 November, unleashing a ban by several countries on flights from several **Southern African** countries, including South Africa. The **United Kingdom (UK)** added South Africa to its "*red list*" on 26 November but removed it on 15 December after it was found that the UK had more Omicron cases than South Africa.<sup>34</sup> The WHO has said that travel bans are ineffective in preventing the spread of a virus.<sup>35</sup>

The epidemiological situation in South Africa has been characterised by three distinct peaks in reported cases, the latest of which was predominantly the **Delta** variant. In recent weeks, infections have increased steeply, coinciding with the detection of B.1.1.529 variant. The first known confirmed B.1.1.529 infection was from a specimen collected on 9 November.<sup>36</sup>

### ... as daily Covid cases reach record high

The government extended the **State of Disaster** by another month on 9 December until 15 January with the **Department of Health (DoH)** anticipating a fourth wave of Covid-19 infections.<sup>37</sup> In his "*family meeting*" on 28 November, President Ramaphosa kept the lockdown restriction at Level 1.<sup>38</sup> Ramaphosa and minerals minister **Gwede Mantashe** have both tested positive for Covid despite being fully vaccinated against the disease.<sup>39</sup>

The number of new daily Covid-19 cases jumped to a record 37,875 on 12 December from 136 on 15 November.<sup>40</sup> The previous record of 26,485 was set on 3 July. The cumulative total of Covid-19 cases in South Africa's population of 60 million is 3,316,585 as of 20 December. The **National Institute for Communicable Diseases** reports that there have been 89,555 deaths attributed to Covid-19 complications in South Africa.<sup>41</sup>

The DoH has fully vaccinated the equivalent of 44.47% of South Africa's adult population against Covid-19.<sup>42</sup> The **South African Covid-19 Modelling Consortium** noted on 17 November that seroprevalence surveys and other data indicate that an estimated 60% to 70% of South Africa's population has already contracted Covid-19, which together with vaccination against Covid-19 will provide protection from severe disease.<sup>43</sup> South Africa uses the **United States**-manufactured **Pfizer BioNTech** two-dose mRNA vaccine, accepted by most other countries.

The **National Economic Development and Labour Council (Nedlac)** will approach the Constitutional Court early in 2022 about proposals to implement mandatory Covid-19 vaccination.<sup>44</sup> Although many universities and workplaces have already implemented mandatory proof of Covid vaccination for access and employment, Ramaphosa is in a delicate situation with regard to implementing so-called "*vaccine passports*". These are strongly reminiscent of the "*passbooks*" that were mandatory for South Africa's "*non-White*" population during the apartheid era. However, the issue may in any event be moot as the Omicron variant appears to infect people whether they have been vaccinated against Covid-19 or not.<sup>45</sup> Neighbouring countries currently require a negative PCR Covid test performed within 72 hours of crossing the border, rather than proof of vaccination.

<sup>34</sup> Reuters, 15 Dec 2021

<sup>35</sup> WHO, 26 Nov 2021

<sup>36</sup> WHO, 26 Nov 2021

<sup>37</sup> Presidency, 9 Dec 2021

<sup>38</sup> Presidency, 28 Nov 2021

<sup>39</sup> News24, 19 Dec 2021

<sup>40</sup> NICD, 12 Dec 2021

<sup>41</sup> NICD, 20 Dec 2021

<sup>42</sup> NICD, 21 Dec 2021

<sup>43</sup> NICD, 19 Nov 2021

<sup>44</sup> Engineering News, 7 Dec 2021

<sup>45</sup> Source, South Africa analyst

## Planner

8 Jan 2022 **Polokwane (South Africa)** ANC 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations;

18-20 Jan 2022 **Pretoria (South Africa)** **South African Reserve Bank (SARB)** (central bank) MPC meeting;

23 Feb 2022 **Cape Town (South Africa)** Presentation of Budget;

22-24 Mar 2022 **Pretoria (South Africa)** **SARB** MPC meeting;

9-12 May 2022 **Cape Town (South Africa)** **Investing in African Mining Indaba**;

24-26 May 2022 **Pretoria (South Africa)** **SARB** MPC meeting;

19-21 Jul 2022 **Pretoria (South Africa)** **SARB** MPC meeting;

20-22 Sep 2021 **Pretoria (South Africa)** **SARB** MPC meeting;

15-17 Nov 2022 **Pretoria (South Africa)** **SARB** MPC meeting;

2024 **(South Africa)** General election

## Chronology

21 Dec 2021 **Johannesburg (South Africa)** Former president **Jacob Zuma** is given leave to appeal to the **Supreme Court of Appeal** to have his medical parole re-instated;

20 Dec 2021 **Johannesburg (South Africa)** *Engineering News*. State-owned power utility **Eskom** says it has executed the separation of its transmission division, subject to certain conditions, in line with an end-December deadline set in a restructuring plan;

15 Dec 2021 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *Pretoria News*. Justice **KE Matojane** rules in the **Gauteng High Court** that former president **Jacob Zuma's** medical parole be revoked immediately and that he be returned to the custody of **Correctional Services** to serve out the remainder of his sentence for contempt of the **Constitutional Court**;

15 Dec 2021 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *Engineering News*. The tourism industry welcomes the removal of **Southern African** countries from the **United Kingdom's** red list;

13 Dec 2021 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *Bloomberg*. President **Cyril Ramaphosa** tests positive for **Covid-19** and receives treatment for mild symptoms;

12 Dec 2021 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *National Institute for Communicable Diseases*. Daily new cases reach a record 37,875 on 12 December, greatly exceeding the previous record of 26,485 cases set on 3 July.

9 Dec 2021 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *News24*. **University of Pretoria** researcher professor **Marietjie Venter** is appointed as chair of the **World Health Organisation's** (WHO) **Scientific Advisory Group for the Origins (SAGO) of Novel Pathogens**;

9 Dec 2021 **Cape Town (South Africa)** *The Cape Times*. **South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (Sahpra)** approves a cheap locally developed **Covid-19** antigen detection kit;

9 Dec 2021 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *Presidency*. The government extends the state of disaster to 15 January 2022;

8 Dec 2021 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *News24*. Only 27% of the 425 government departments and entities audited by the Auditor-General (AG) have received clean audits.

8 Dec 2021 **Cape Town (South Africa)** *Reuters*. A proposal to change **South Africa's** constitution to explicitly allow expropriation of land with no compensation fails to win the two-thirds of parliamentary votes that it needed to pass;

7 Dec 2021 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *Engineering News*. The **National Economic Development and Labour Council (Nedlac)** will approach the **Constitutional Court** early in 2022 about proposals to implement mandatory **Covid-19** vaccination;

7 Dec 2021 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *Statistics South Africa*. **South Africa's** economy contracted by 1.5% in the third quarter on a quarter-on-quarter seasonally adjusted basis;

7 Dec 2021 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *News24*. Investigations into the irregular R150m (\$9.5m) **Digital Vibes** contract have so far yielded little results as only R12m (\$760,000) has been repaid by those who benefitted illegally;

7 Dec 2021 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *News24*. **National Director of Public Prosecutions** advocate **Shamila Batohi** denies that the resignation of **Investigating Directorate (ID)** head advocate **Hermione Cronje** was a result of "interpersonal relations";

5 Dec 2021 **Randburg (South Africa)** *eNCA*. The assault case against **Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF)** leader **Julius Malema** and MP **Mbuyiseni Ndlozi** on charges of assaulting Lieutenant Colonel **Johannes Jacobus Venter** at the funeral of **Winnie Madikizela-Mandela** funeral on 14 April 2018 is postponed to 7 April 2022;

30 Nov 2021 **Gqeberha (South Africa)** *The Herald*. Pharmaceutical company **Aspen Pharmacare** will manufacture and sell its own branded **Covid-19** vaccine, "*Aspenovax*", in **Africa**, following an agreement with **United States**-headquartered pharmaceutical company **Johnson & Johnson**.

30 Nov 2021 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *Statistics South Africa*. South Africa's unemployment rate hit a new record high of 34.9% in the third quarter of 2021 from 34.4% in the second quarter;

29 Nov 2021 **Dakar (Senegal)** *Reuters*. **China's** President **Xi Jinping** says China will offer another 1 billion doses of Covid-19 vaccines to **African** countries, and encourages Chinese companies to invest no less than \$10 billion in Africa over the next three years;

29 Nov 2021 **Kigali (Rwanda)** *Reuters*. **Rwanda** becomes the first country in **sub-Saharan Africa** to impose a ban on inbound and outbound flights to **Southern African** countries in the wake of the new variant of the virus that causes Covid-19, Omicron;

28 Nov 2021 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *Presidency*. President **Cyril Ramaphosa** says South Africa will remain under an Alert Level 1 lockdown as scientists continue to try to find out as much information as possible about the **Omicron** variant;

26 Nov 2021 **Brussels (Belgium)** *Reuters*. The **European Union (EU)** aims to halt air travel from the **Southern African** region amid rising concern about a new Covid-19 variant detected in South Africa, following a similar move by the **United Kingdom**;

23 Nov 2021 **Cape Town (South Africa)** *Bloomberg*. The **Department of Mineral Resources and Energy** tells parliament that it will not challenge a **High Court** ruling in September that struck down some key changes to mining rules that govern black ownership targets;

22 Nov 2021 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *News24Wire*. National **South African Police Service (SAPS)** commissioner General **Khehla Sitole** tells the **South African Human Rights Commission's** national hearings into the July unrest that the police were overstretched and didn't have capacity to deal with the insurrection attempt.

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