

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

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Prime minister Ousmane Sonko causes an institutional crisis after a disagreement with the Assemblée nationale (national assembly), which is largely made up of members of former ruling coalition Benno Bokk Yaakaar (BBY), over the office of the prime minister. President Bassirou Diomaye Faye (2024-present) addresses the media on 13 July to mark his first 100 days in office, reiterating several campaign promises, including plans to renegotiate oil and gas contracts. Following through on his campaign promise of re-examining key government contracts signed under the previous administration, Faye's government confirms on 3 July that it will cancel a 459 billion FCFA (\$759.18m) contract with Saudi Arabia's ACWA Power signed with state-owned water company SONES.

Political pains

Prime minister **Ousmane Sonko** has caused an institutional crisis after a disagreement with the **Assemblée nationale** (national assembly), which is largely made up of members of former ruling coalition **Benno Bokk Yaakaar (BBY)**, over the office of the prime minister.¹ Sonko was set to make a *declaration de politique générale (DPG)* (general policy declaration) to the national assembly, which the constitution provides should take place within three months of his taking office. However, the terms of this statement were removed from the national assembly's rules when former president **Macky Sall** (2012-2024) abolished the post of prime minister in 2019. They have not been reinstated despite Sall appointing a prime minister, **Amadou Ba**, in September 2022.² Sonko declared on 28 June that he would only present his DPG once the parliamentary majority (in this case the BBY) amended the provisions concerning the prime minister and reinstated the regulations. Sonko gave an ultimatum to the national assembly and said the changes were to be made by 15 July.

Yewwi Askan Wi (YAW) parliamentary group president **Ayib Daffé** described the situation in the national assembly as "*a storm in a teapot*".³ Currently, the ruling YAW coalition – which is led by the ruling **Patriotes africains du Sénégal pour le travail, l'éthique et la fraternité (PASTEF)** party – has 42 seats in the national assembly while BBY has 83. Opposition **Wallu Sénégal** has 24 seats. Daffé told the media that national assembly members were summoned to meet at 9am on 29 June but that national assembly speaker **Amadou Mame Diop** arrived at 10am and said the meeting would be postponed as Sonko was "*disrespectful and unpleasant*" in his attitude the previous day. The financial budget was set to be presented on 29 June, further complicating the matter.

Opposition MPs have been critical of Sonko's decision to not present his general policy statement, noting that Ba gave his statement in December 2022 despite the amendments Sonko is asking for not having been made.⁴ Furthermore, when Ba delivered his statement, no MP contested his legitimacy. Former minister and presidential candidate in the February elections **Thierno Alassane Sall** believes that Sonko is avoiding presenting his general policy statement until the national assembly is dissolved and the YAW coalition is potentially voted in as the majority.⁵ There is also speculation that Sonko is hoping to avoid a motion of censure against him.⁶

¹ Le Quotidien, 2 Jul 2024

² Jeune Afrique, 2 Jul 2024

³ Le Quotidien, 2 Jul 2024

⁴ Jeune Afrique, 2 Jul 2024

⁵ Jeune Afrique, 2 Jul 2024

⁶ Le Monde, 3 Jul 2024

If President **Bassirou Diomaye Faye** (2024-present) were to dissolve the national assembly, it would allow him to pass legislation more freely (*see ARC Briefing Senegal Mar 2024*). However, Faye has to wait until two years have passed since the last election before he can do so, which would be in September.⁷ BBY parliamentary group vice president **Adji Mergane Kanouté** confirmed that BBY is working on a bill that would remove the president's power to dissolve the national assembly, "*in the name of the principle of the separation of powers*".⁸ BBY would need at least 100 votes but has only 83 seats, meaning it would have to win the support of other opposition parties. Former justice minister **Me Doudou Ndoye** has opined that this bill has little chance of succeeding because the president has the power to send any constitutional revision to a referendum.⁹ Given that Faye won the election with 54.28%, it could be assumed that his supporters would vote against a constitutional revision that Faye did not support.

Opposition party **Parti démocratique sénégalais (PDS)** tabled a bill on 1 July to amend the national assembly regulations as Sonko requested, indicating that it would probably not vote in favour of the BBY's bill. Opposition **Taxawu Senegal**, led by former **Dakar** mayor **Khalifa Sall**, has also indicated it would not support BBY's bill but has said Sonko should adopt a conciliatory approach.¹⁰

Although the BBY's bill seems unlikely to pass, its introduction saw Faye step in and confirm on 13 July that he had spoken to Sonko and instructed the national assembly to update the regulations.¹¹ Parliamentary group presidents met on 22 and 23 July to discuss the parliamentary impasse with the conclusions reportedly submitted to Faye on 24 July for review.¹²

Faye marks 100 days in office

President Faye addressed the media on 13 July to mark his first 100 days in office, reiterating several campaign promises, including plans to renegotiate oil and gas contracts. Senegal officially began production of the **Sangomar** oil field on 11 June, but Faye remained resolute that renegotiations would still take place, as he believes these contracts could have been better negotiated from the start.¹³ Faye also confirmed that Senegal and **Mauritania** have requested an audit on the **Grand Tortue Ahmeyim (GTA)** gas project which is being carried out with **United Kingdom**-headquartered **BP** after the two countries detected an unjustified additional cost.

Renegotiations of oil, gas and mining contracts was a key campaign promise Faye made. Another area where Faye has pursued reforms is the justice system, with a report submitted to him in June on recommendations from various forums.¹⁴ He has also ordered additional audits on public ministry accounts and construction projects on the coastline.

Regionally, Faye has also kept busy. The **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)** bestowed on him the responsibility of keeping the regional bloc together after junta led **Burkina Faso, Niger** and **Mali** announced their withdrawal. Faye in his first 100 days has travelled to Burkina Faso and Mali as well as **The Gambia, Nigeria, Mauritania** and **Côte d'Ivoire**.¹⁵ Faye acknowledged in the interview that he feels in a better position to negotiate, as these states "*do not see me as someone among those who sanctioned them*".¹⁶ While the junta-led countries have also pushed an anti-**French** sentiment that some expected Faye to also display, Faye confirmed that he will continue to discuss the French military presence in Senegal "*calmly*" and not pursue a sudden break.¹⁷

⁷ Le Monde, 3 Jul 2024

⁸ Le Monde, 3 Jul 2024

⁹ Jeune Afrique, 9 Jul 2024

¹⁰ Jeune Afrique, 9 Jul 2024

¹¹ Le Quotidien, 15 Jul 2024

¹² APA News, 24 Jul 2024

¹³ Le Quotidien, 15 Jul 2024

¹⁴ Africanews, 10 Jul 2024

¹⁵ Africanews, 10 Jul 2024

¹⁶ Jeune Afrique, 14 Jul 2024

¹⁷ Jeune Afrique, 14 Jul 2024

Despite progress, there has been criticism that several projects have been delayed, including a bill on the protection of whistle-blowers – which was set to be finalised by 15 May – and the establishment of a commission to compensate victims of the political protests that took place between 2021 and 2024.¹⁸

The media also questioned Faye about Senegal’s relationship with the **Bretton Woods** institutions – the **World Bank** and the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**. Faye noted that they remain partners but not “scapegoats” and that Senegal needs to improve the mobilisation of resources to avoid going into more debt.¹⁹ Faye acknowledged that Senegal no longer has much margin for debt. The IMF confirmed in May that Senegal’s debt was equal to 73.4% of its GDP, above the **West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU)** ceiling of 70% of GDP.²⁰

While Faye’s first 100 days have been productive, he nevertheless faces issues such as the divisions in the national assembly, which are likely delaying his planned reforms. Faye will need to address these issues until he can dissolve the national assembly, while keeping Sonko in check to avoid bringing the legislature’s activities to a standstill. Faye will also need to balance meeting regional pressures and focussing attention on issues at home.

Government cancels desalination plant contract

Following through on his campaign promise of revisiting key government contracts signed under the previous administration, Faye’s government confirmed on 3 July that it would cancel a 459 billion FCFA (\$759.18m) contract with **Saudi Arabia’s ACWA Power** signed with state-owned water company **SONES**. The contract, signed in March, was touted as one of the largest private sector investments in Senegal.²¹

Water minister **Cheikh Tidiane Dieye** said in a statement that the project no longer “fits with the government’s strategy options”.²² Dieye confirmed that under the contract, Senegal was to pay ACWA Power \$33m a year for water from the plant, which risked the price of water increasing for citizens. The termination of the contract is the first with an international company since Faye was elected and signals his government’s willingness to follow through on cancelling contracts it does not deem beneficial to Senegal.

Planner

Q3 2024 (**Senegal**) **Grand Tortue Ahmeyim (GTA)** offshore gas field production of natural gas is set to begin;

2027 (**Senegal**) **Yakaar-Teranga** gas project set to begin production;

Chronology

24 Jul 2024 **Baku (The Gambia)** *APA News*. **Senegalese** and Gambian military officials meet in The Gambia to discuss strengthening military cooperation;

17 Jul 2024 **Dakar (Senegal)** *APA News*. Customs authority seizes over 40kg of cocaine worth an estimated 3.2 billion FCFA (\$5.31m) in the suitcases of a **French** national leaving for **Europe**;

17 Jul 2024 **Dakar (Senegal)** *Medafrica Times*. **United Arab Emirates**-based **DP World** confirms that **Port of Dakar** exported a record 200,000 tonnes of cashews in 2023;

17 Jul 2024 **Dakar (Senegal)** *Le Quotidien*. President **Bassirou Diomaye Faye** addresses a press conference marking his 100 days in office, reiterating the government’s aim to renegotiate oil and gas contracts;

¹⁸ Africanews, 10 Jul 2024

¹⁹ Le Quotidien, 15 Jul 2024

²⁰ IMF, 3 May 2024

²¹ Arab News, 28 Mar 2024

²² AFP, 4 Jul 2024

- 16 Jul 2024 **Dakar (Senegal)** *APA News*. President **Bassirou Diomaye Faye** meets with **Germany's** foreign minister, **Annalena Baerbock**, to discuss bilateral relations;
- 15 Jul 2024 **Dakar (Senegal)** *Le Quotidien*. President **Bassirou Diomaye Faye** appoints long time diplomat **Abdoulaye Bathily** as his new special envoy on international issues;
- 14 Jul 2024 **Dakar (Senegal)** *Sika Finance*. President **Bassirou Diomaye Faye** says Senegal will carry out an audit of the costs of the **Sangomar** oil project even though it has already started production;
- 10 Jul 2024 **Dakar (Senegal)** *APA News*. President **Bassirou Diomaye Faye** meets with **Russia's** deputy foreign affairs minister, **Mikhail Bogdanov**, to discuss strengthening bilateral relations;
- 8 Jul 2024 **Dakar (Senegal)** *Anadolu Agency*. **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)** appoints President **Bassirou Diomaye Faye** to mediate with junta-led **Burkina Faso, Mali** and **Niger**, which have left ECOWAS;
- 7 Jul 2024 **Dakar (Senegal)** *RFI*. Energy and mines minister **Birame Souleye Diop** says government intends to review the contracts of mining companies that do not fulfil their environmental obligations;
- 4 Jul 2024 **Dakar (Senegal)** *AFP*. Water minister **Cheikh Tidiane Dieye** says state water company **SONES** will annul a \$757.2m contract with **Saudi Arabia's ACWA Power** for a water desalination plant, saying it no longer fits with the government's strategy options;
- 3 Jul 2024 **Dakar (Senegal)** *Le Quotidien*. Prime minister **Ousmane Sonko** appoints 20 advisors to his office in several fields including defence, security, health, mines, oil, finance and diplomacy;
- 26 Jun 2024 **Dakar (Senegal)** *APA News*. Communication minister **Alioune Sall** unveils the broad outlines of reforms for the media sector including the creation of a new regulatory body;

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