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President Macky Sall (2012-present) co-chairs the 8th edition of the ministerial conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in Diamniadio alongside China's premier, Xi Jinping (2013-present), with both leaders outlining the China-Africa cooperation agenda. South Africa's President Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa (2018-present) pays a state visit to Senegal as South Africa signs four bilateral agreements. President Sall and his Mauritanian counterpart, President Mohamed Ould El-Ghazouani (2019-present), lay the foundation stone for the construction of the €87.63m (\$98.9m) Rosso Bridge that will link their countries. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) raises its 2021 growth projections for Senegal from 3.5% to 5%, estimating that growth will reach double digits in 2023/24, when the country officially begins oil and gas production. Senegal continues to experience a low Covid-19 infection rate amongst its population and to date has detected one case of the so-called Omicron variant. President Sall decries the travel ban imposed on African countries as a result of the discovery of the new variant.

Sall co-chairs Forum on China-Africa Cooperation

President **Macky Sall** (2012-present) co-chaired the 8th edition of the ministerial conference of the **Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC)**, held in **Diamniadio** from 29-30 November, alongside **China's premier, Xi Jinping** (2013-present).¹ The FOCAC has taken place every three years since 2000, and serves as a platform to examine China-Africa relations. The last edition was held in 2018, in Chinese capital **Beijing**.²

Due to the continuing **Covid-19** pandemic, the forum was significantly scaled down, with most attendees, including Xi, attending via videoconference.³ However, several high-ranking officials, including **African Union Commission (AUC)** chair **Moussa Faki**, travelled to **Senegal** for the event.⁴

Sall reaffirmed the strong relations between China and Africa, claiming Covid-19 has not negatively impacted them.⁵ He thanked Xi for China's support for the continent's health response and economic recovery efforts, including China's endorsement of the \$650 billion in **Special Drawing Rights (SDR)** made available by the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**.⁶ Sall identified five priority domains that will form the basis of China-Africa relations from 2021-2023. These include:

- Strengthening pharmaceutical and medical sovereignty and health security across Africa;
- Modernising agriculture to support economic emergence and employment;
- Strengthening technical and vocational training, in order to promote entrepreneurship, and self-employment for the youth;
- Building basic infrastructure;
- Improving industrial capacity to increase production of finished goods that can be exported to China and global markets.⁷

¹ Sud Quotidien, 30 Nov 2021

² Jeune Afrique, 29 Nov 2021

³ Jeune Afrique, 29 Nov 2021

⁴ Dakar Actu, 30 Nov 2021

⁵ Dakar Actu, 29 Nov 2021

⁶ Dakar Actu, 29 Nov 2021

⁷ Sud Quotidien, 30 Nov 2021

Xi outlined the nine major points that will inform China's engagement with Africa from 2021 to 2023.⁸ A landmark announcement was China's decision to provide 1 billion doses of Covid-19 vaccines, of which 600 million will be donated, while the remaining 400 million will be made available through joint production between Chinese firms and the African countries concerned.⁹ Xi also pledged to send 1,500 medical professionals and health experts to Africa to help Covid-19 response efforts.¹⁰ In the economic realm, the premier promised to encourage Chinese companies to invest \$10 billion in Africa and to set up a platform to promote China-Africa private investment.¹¹ Chinese investors will be encouraged to focus on African small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and cross-border trade activities.¹² Xi pledged to increase the trade volume between China and Africa by \$300 billion through the establishment of "*green corridors*" to ensure that African agricultural projects have access to Chinese markets.¹³ The promotion of agriculture activities falls in line with China's stated aim to reduce poverty.¹⁴ Xi said China would write off debts for interest-free intergovernmental loans that China had granted to African governments.¹⁵ Other areas of focus in China's short-term cooperation agenda with Africa include the promotion of the digital economy and innovation, environmental protection and climate change, the **African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCTA)** and the **Silk Road E-Commerce** initiative.¹⁶

Senegal's foreign ministry describes China as the leading foreign investor in Senegal and its second largest trade partner.¹⁷ China has undertaken several major development projects across Senegal; the **China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC)** built the 133-km **Ila Touba** highway connecting the three regions of **Dakar**, **Thiès** and **Diourbel** at a cost of \$800m.¹⁸ China also built a 20,000-seat football stadium in Dakar and created the **Diamniadio Industrial Zone**.¹⁹ Senegal's foreign minister, **Aissata Tall Sall**, during a joint press conference with Chinese state councillor and foreign affairs minister **Wang Yi**, said the time is ripe for Africa to consolidate its ties with China, declaring that Senegal will start production of Covid-19 vaccines in 2022 with Chinese assistance.²⁰ Sall added that China had provided 1,200 billion FCFA (\$2.065 billion) in financial support to Senegal.²¹ Of this, concessional loans amounted to 1,039 billion FCFA (\$1.787 billion), grants 117 billion FCFA (\$201.2m), while 50 billion FCFA (\$86m) was allocated as interest-free loans.²² Senegal receives 80 billion FCFA (\$137.6m) in financial assistance annually from China towards agriculture, culture, health, industry, infrastructure, sports and water development.²³ Sall noted:

*"We are conducting this financial cooperation transparently, with full responsibility so as not to worsen our level of indebtedness."*²⁴

Sall's declaration came after **United States** secretary of state **Antony Blinken**, during his three-country tour in November, cautioned African countries against overextending themselves (see *ARC Briefing Senegal November 2021*).²⁵ The declaration was perceived as a reference to China, which is the largest bilateral creditor for most African nations.

⁸ Dakar Actu, 29 Nov 2021

⁹ Dakar Actu, 29 Nov 2021

¹⁰ Dakar Actu, 29 Nov 2021

¹¹ Dakar Actu, 29 Nov 2021

¹² Dakar Actu, 29 Nov 2021

¹³ Jeune Afrique, 29 Nov 2021

¹⁴ Jeune Afrique, 29 Nov 2021

¹⁵ Dakar Actu, 29 Nov 2021

¹⁶ Dakar Actu, 29 Nov 2021

¹⁷ China Briefing, 27 Feb 2019

¹⁸ China Briefing, 27 Feb 2019

¹⁹ China Briefing, 27 Feb 2019

²⁰ Le Quotidien, 1 Dec 2021

²¹ Teranga News, 29 Nov 2021

²² Teranga News, 29 Nov 2021

²³ Teranga News, 29 Nov 2021

²⁴ Teranga News, 29 Nov 2021

²⁵ Dakar Actu, 20 Nov 2021

South Africa's President Ramaphosa visits Senegal ...

South Africa's President **Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa** (2018-present) undertook an official visit to Senegal from 5-7 December, the last leg of a four-nation **West African** tour that included stops in **Nigeria, Ghana** and **Côte d'Ivoire**.²⁶ Ramaphosa was invited to attend as the keynote speaker at the **7th Dakar International Forum on Peace and Security**, which the Senegalese government has held annually since 2014.²⁷ During the opening session, Ramaphosa criticised Western countries for imposing blanket travel bans on African countries following the discovery of the so-called **Omicron** variant of Covid-19 (see below):

*"We reject what the **United Nations** secretary general has rightly called travellers apartheid (...) This is a global pandemic and it warrants cooperation, not 'isolation and punishment of some countries'."*²⁸

President Sall underlined the importance of bilateral cooperation between Senegal and South Africa, the only African member of the **G20**.²⁹ Sall praised the convergence of viewpoints with respect to regional, multilateral and international issues, particularly in the areas of development, **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)** reform, climate change, health, and international peace and security.³⁰ Ramaphosa acknowledged Senegal's historic role, particularly that of former president **Abdou Diouf** (1981-2000), in facilitating historic talks in 1987 between the formerly banned **African National Congress (ANC)** and South Africa's apartheid-era authorities.³¹

Ramaphosa expressed his desire to collaborate further with Sall, who assumes the **African Union (AU)** presidency in 2022.³² Ramaphosa's visit concluded with the signing of four cooperation agreements in the domains of health, fisheries and aquaculture, and political consultation as well as the establishment of a joint commission between both nations.³³ The **Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar (UCAD)** conferred an honorary doctorate on Ramaphosa on 6 December.³⁴

... as Senegal and Mauritania launch construction of Rosso bridge

President Macky Sall and his **Mauritanian** counterpart, **Mohamed Ould El-Ghazouani** (2019-present), have laid the foundation stone for the construction of the **Rosso Bridge** linking their two countries.³⁵ The bridge will connect the two banks of the **River Senegal** and facilitate the movement of persons, goods and services between Senegal and Mauritania, promoting sub-regional trade and commerce between **sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa** and **Europe**.³⁶

Sall launched work on the Rosso Bridge in Rosso (Mauritania) on 30 November. The project, whose cost has been set at €87.63m (\$98.9m), will be jointly financed through loans amounting to €40.75m (\$45.9m) and €22.3m (\$25.1m) from the **African Development Bank (AfDB)** and **European Investment Bank (EIB)** respectively, a €20m (\$22.55m) donation by the **European Union (EU)**, as well as contributions of €3.5m (\$3.9m) and €1.04m (\$1.1m) from the governments of Mauritania and Senegal.³⁷ China-based **Poly Chandga**, a subsidiary of **China Poly Group**, will build the 1.462-metre bridge, with construction expected to last 30 months.³⁸

²⁶ www.gov.za, 5 Dec 2021

²⁷ www.gov.za, 5 Dec 2021

²⁸ La Tribune Afrique, 12 Dec 2021

²⁹ Dakar Actu, 7 Dec 2021

³⁰ Lejocos, 8 Dec 2021

³¹ La Tribune Afrique, 12 Dec 2021

³² Lejocos, 8 Dec 2021

³³ Teranga News, 9 Dec 2021

³⁴ La Tribune Afrique, 12 Dec 2021

³⁵ Le Soleil, 30 Nov 2021

³⁶ Le Soleil, 30 Nov 2021

³⁷ APS, 30 Nov 2021

³⁸ Financial Afrik, 1 Dec 2021

The construction of the bridge is one of the objectives outlined in the **Organisation pour la mise en Valeur du Fleuve Senegal (OMVS)** (organisation for development of the Senegal River).³⁹ President Sall said the bridge will improve cooperation, revitalise historic cross-border trade, and eliminate hindrances related to the movement of goods.⁴⁰ Residents of the **St. Louis** (Senegal) and **Trarza** (Mauritania) regions will benefit directly from the bridge.⁴¹ Sall also claims the bridge will help to reduce crime and improve security in the area. The bridge supports the sub-regional integration policy, through the establishment of the **Transcoastal Corridor**, a proposed road network that aims to link **Lagos** (Nigeria)-**Abidjan** (Côte d'Ivoire)-**Dakar** (Senegal)-**Nouakchott** (Mauritania)-**Tanger** (Morocco)-**Casablanca** (Morocco).⁴²

IMF projects 5% growth for 2021

The **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** has raised its 2021 growth projections for Senegal from 3.5% to 5% and estimates growth will reach double digits in 2023/24, when the country officially begins oil and gas production.⁴³ The IMF announced its projections on 1 December after completing its mission reviews under the **Policy Coordination Instrument (PCI)**, **Stand-By Credit Facility (SCB)** and **Stand-By Arrangement (SBA)** for Senegal. The IMF conducted its hybrid mission from 22 October to 20 November.

IMF mission head **Corinne Deléchat** said the IMF team had reached staff-level agreement with the Senegalese authorities on economic and financial policies that could support approval of the fourth review under the PCI and the first review of the 18-month financing arrangements under the SCF and SBA.⁴⁴ This would enable Senegal to access \$180m in IMF financial assistance, with total IMF support under the SCF and SBA arrangements amounting to around \$360m.

Deléchat reported that the upwards revision in Senegal's growth rate was a result of an increase in industrial activity, services production and continued policy support during Q3.⁴⁵ The IMF suggests Senegal's medium-term outlook is favourable, as growth will improve marginally to 5.5% in 2022 and peak around 10% in 2023/24, with the commencement of oil and gas production, before stabilising to around 6% annually over the medium term.

Referring to the 2022 draft budget (currently under examination), the IMF praised the government for its implementation of social protection programmes such as the **Programme National de Bourse de Sécurité Familiale** (national family security bursary programme) cash transfer scheme.⁴⁶ The IMF encouraged the government to expand the beneficiary base and adopt mobile payment options to make the initiative more effective.⁴⁷ The IMF noted that the budget deficit is set at 4.8% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2022, but believes that Senegal can achieve the **West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU)** threshold of a 3% fiscal deficit by 2024 through improved domestic revenue mobilisation, the implementation of the medium-term revenue strategy, streamlining fuel and electricity subsidies, and enhancing public spending efficiency. The IMF suggests the government facilitate private sector development by lowering the cost of and increasing access to electricity supply, expanding access to credit and land, ameliorating public service through digitisation and making the population more employable on the job market.

Over the last decade, Senegal has experienced an economic growth trajectory, averaging 6% growth during the 2011-2018 timeframe.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, these figures have not fully translated into increased prosperity and improved livelihoods for the Senegalese population. In September, the

³⁹ Lejocos, 1 Dec 2021

⁴⁰ Agence Ecofin, 1 Dec 2021

⁴¹ Le Soleil, 30 Nov 2021

⁴² APS, 30 Nov 2021

⁴³ IMF, 1 Dec 2021

⁴⁴ IMF, 1 Dec 2021

⁴⁵ IMF, 1 Dec 2021

⁴⁶ Lejocos, 2 Dec 2021

⁴⁷ Lejocos, 2 Dec 2021

⁴⁸ Financial Afrik, 14 Sep 2021

Agence Nationale du Statistique et de la Démographie (ANSD) (national agency for statistics and demographics) reported that 50.9% of households in Senegal live in poverty, while 8% live in extreme poverty, below the threshold of \$2 per day.⁴⁹ The number of poor people increased from 5,832,008 in 2011 to 6,032,379 in 2018 (see *ARC Briefing Senegal September 2021*).⁵⁰

Senegal sees further drop in Covid-19 cases

Senegal continues to experience a low Covid-19 infection rate amongst its population. On 5 December, it confirmed its first case of the so-called Omicron variant within Senegal.⁵¹ Senegal has seen a remarkable drop in Covid-19 case numbers since November. In the week of 6-11 December, there were no deaths attributed to Covid-19, although the number of daily recorded new Covid-19 cases increased from 7 to 11 in the timeframe.⁵² As of 11 December, Senegal had registered 74,076 cases of Covid-19, 72,145 recoveries and 1,886 Covid-19-related deaths in its population of 17.32 million. The number of Covid-19-related deaths has only increased by one since 26 November, despite the relatively low Covid-19 vaccination rate. As of 11 December, health authorities have administered 1,337,702 doses of Covid-19 vaccine, compared with 1,322,091 vaccines as of 26 November.⁵³

President Sall has called on the Senegalese population to remain alert, warning that the virus has not been eliminated.⁵⁴ Sall criticised the border closures introduced by several Western nations mainly against African countries following the discovery of the Omicron variant.⁵⁵ Speaking at the Dakar International Forum for Peace and Security, Sall described the measures as discriminatory and counterproductive and suggested that a united approach be adopted to address the current challenge.⁵⁶

2021 in review and looking ahead to 2022

Senegal experienced its worst socio-political violence in a decade in March, when anti-government protests led to at least eight deaths. The catalyst for the protests was the arrest and detention of opposition **Patriotes du Senegal pour le Travail, l’Ethique et la Fraternité (PASTEF)** president and member of parliament (MP) **Ousmane Sonko**. However, rising unemployment, poverty, state corruption and the perceived influence of foreign enterprises in Senegal sustained the protests. The initial government response was the use of force accompanied by non-conciliatory declarations by high-ranking officials. However, Sall announced the creation of the 350 billion FCFA (\$634.1m) **Programme d’Urgence pour l’Emploi et l’Insertion Socio-Économique des Jeunes (PUEISE-Jeunes)** (emergency youth employment and socio-economic placement programme) to appease the protesters. The government also lifted most Covid-19 restrictive measures, including the much-criticised curfew, in response to protest demands (see *ARC Briefing Senegal March 2021*).

In another sign of rising socio-political tensions, members of the **Yewi Askan Wi (YAW)** opposition coalition clashed with police in November, following the arrest of Sonko and YAW member **Barthélémy Dias**. Dias is YAW’s mayoral candidate for the capital, Dakar, for the 23 January local elections. Although the leaders were released shortly after their arrest, there are growing concerns that electoral violence will take place in January. The **Cadre Unitaire de l’Islam**, a collective of the leaders from the various Muslim brotherhoods, has formulated a non-violence charter ahead of the contest, which it hopes all political parties will adhere to (see *ARC Briefing Senegal November 2021*). The YAW coalition, created in September, consists of over 20 parties with Sonko and former mayor of

⁴⁹ APS, 13 Sep 2021

⁵⁰ APS, 13 Sep 2021

⁵¹ ARC Senegal analyst

⁵² Ministère de la Santé et Action Sociale, 6-11 Dec 2021

⁵³ Ministère de la Santé et Action Sociale, 11 Dec 2021

⁵⁴ APS, 4 Dec 2021

⁵⁵ APS, 6 Dec 2021

⁵⁶ APS, 6 Dec 2021

Dakar and **Taxawa Sénégal** leader **Khalifa Sall** among its prominent members (see *ARC Briefing Senegal Sep 2021*).⁵⁷

The 23 January local elections will serve as a litmus test for the **Benno Bokk Yakaar (BBY)** presidential coalition and President Sall's party, the **Alliance pour la République (APR)**. During the November 2020 cabinet reshuffle, Sall co-opted 2019 presidential election runner up and opposition **Remwi** party leader **Idrissa Seck** as president of the **Conseil Economique, Social et Environnemental (CESE)** (economic, social and environmental council). Former **Parti Democratique Senegalais (PDS)** second-in-command **Oumar Sarr** was named to to the mines and geology department (see *ARC Briefing Senegal November 2020*). The inclusion of key opposition politicians in the executive may give the impression that the ruling coalition will have an easy electoral campaign; however, electoral success for the ruling party may not come easily amid the emergence of a younger opposition movement, led by Sonko. Sall would like to use the local election to assess the ruling coalition's popularity or lack thereof, ahead of the 2024 contest, for which he has not yet confirmed or denied he will stand as a candidate.⁵⁸

Planner

17-19 Dec 2021 **Istanbul (Turkey) Turkey-Africa** Summit;
 23 Jan 2022 **(Senegal)** Municipal elections;
 2022 **Sangomar** offshore oil field: production of crude oil set to begin
 2023 **(Senegal) Grand Tortue Ahmeyim (GTA)** offshore gas field production of natural gas set to begin.

Chronology

13 Dec 2021 **Dakar (Senegal) APS**. Budget and finance minister **Abdoulaye Daouda Diallo** declares, Senegal public debt to gross domestic product (GDP) ratio will fall from the current figure of 66.7% in 2021, to 55-56% of GDP in 2023;

10 Dec 2021 **Dakar (Senegal) Lejocos**. The **Direction Générale de la Comptabilité Publique et du Trésor** (directorate of public accounting and the treasury) has raised 75 billion FCFA (\$128.9m) through the issue of an "*Obligation de Relance*" (stimulus bond) on the **West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU)** regional financial market

10 Dec 2021 **Dakar (Senegal) Agence Ecofin**. The **Autorité de Régulation des Télécommunications et des Postes (ARTP)** (telecoms regulatory authority) has fined telecoms operators **Sonatel**, **Expresso** and **SAGA Holding** 20.2 billion FCFA (\$34.7m) for providing poor quality service;

10 Dec 2021 **Dakar (Senegal) Jeune Afrique**. The **Assemblée Nationale** (National Assembly) votes on a bill to reinstate the position of prime minister, which was abolished in April 2019;

9 Dec 2021 **Dakar (Senegal) APS**. Fisheries and maritime economy minister **Alioune Ndoye** says construction of the **Ndayane** deep sea port will commence on 6 January;

9 Dec 2021 **Dakar (Senegal) Dakar Actu**. **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** managing director **Kristalina Georgieva** holds audience with President **Macky Sall**, who thanks the IMF for granting **African** countries access to \$100 billion in **Special Drawing Rights (SDR)**;

8 Dec 2021 **Dakar (Senegal) Lejocos**. President **Macky Sall** and **South Africa's** President **Cyril Ramaphosa** sign four cooperation agreement's during Ramaphosa's three-day visit to Senegal;

⁵⁷ Jeune Afrique, 2 Sep 2021

⁵⁸ ARC Senegal analyst

8 Dec 2021 **Dakar (Senegal)** *Financial Afrik*. The **Agence Française de Développement (AFD)** (French development agency) signs 65 billion FCFA (\$111.7m) memorandum of understanding with economy and planning minister **Amadou Hott** towards supporting youth entrepreneurship;

8 Dec 2021 **Dakar (Senegal)** *RFI*. During a wide-ranging interview with **Radio France Internationale (RFI)**, President **Macky Sall** does not confirm or deny whether he will pursue a third presidential term when his current mandate ends in 2024;

7 Dec 2021 **Dakar (Senegal)** *APS*. The regional airports of **Saint-Louis** and **Matam** will be commissioned during the first half of 2022;

6 Dec 2021 **Dakar (Senegal)** *Dakar Actu*. President **Macky Sall** presides over the opening of the 7th **Dakar International Forum on Peace and Security in Africa**;

5 Dec 2021 **Dakar (Senegal)** *AFP*. Officials find first case of the **Omicron** coronavirus variant in Senegal;

1 Dec 2021 **Dakar (Senegal)** *International Monetary Fund*. The **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** revises Senegal's economic growth projections for 2021 upwards, from 3% to 5%;

1 Dec 2021 **Dakar (Senegal)** *Lejocos*. **African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank)** has signed an agreement to provide Senegal's state-owned **Fonds Souverain d'Investissements Stratégiques (Fonsis)** (sovereign fund for strategic investments) with 29 billion FCFA (\$49.9m) to support the implementation of projects outlined in Senegal's medium-term economic development agenda, the **Plan Sénégal Émergent (PSE)**;

1 Dec 2021 **Nouakchott (Mauritania)** *Le Quotidien*. During an official visit to Mauritania, **Senegal's** President **Macky Sall** and his Mauritanian counterpart, **Mohamed Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani**, lay the foundation stone for the construction of the 60 billion FCFA (\$103.2m) **Rosso** bridge over the **River Senegal**, which will link the two countries;

30 Nov 2021 **Dakar (Senegal)** *Financial Times*. In a video address to the triennial **Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC)** held in Senegal, **China's** President **Xi Jinping** pledges \$40 billion to **African** countries in investment, credit lines, trade finance and special drawing rights, less than the \$60 billion pledged at the previous two FOCAC summits;

29 Nov 2021 **Dakar (Senegal)** *Sika Finance*. The **African Development Bank (AfDB)** has provided a 62.5 billion FCFA (\$107.8m) credit line to the Senegalese government to promote industrialisation, competitiveness and employment

29 Nov 2021 **Dakar (Senegal)** *Dakar Actu*. President **Macky Sall** declares during the opening of the 8th edition of **Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC)** that strengthening pharmaceutical and medical sovereignty and health security on the continent will be the main priority for Africa-China cooperation for the 2022-2024 timeframe

28 Nov 2021 **Dakar (Senegal)** *APS*. Economy, planning and cooperation minister **Amadou Hott** says the new law governing Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) will ensure that local entrepreneurs carry out at least 33% of project execution, while projects equal to or below 5 billion FCFA (\$8.6m), will be reserved for local actors;

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