

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

Gabon Monthly Briefing November 2025

Gabon Summary 24 November 2025

France's President Emmanuel Macron (2017-present) visits Gabon on 23 November during a tour of east and central Africa, marking his first visit to Gabon since President Brice Oligui Nguema (2023-present) came into power. The government and United States-headquartered non-profit organisation The Nature Conservancy (TNC) sign a letter of intent on 18 November to advance an agreement to protect 34,000 square kilometres of Gabon's Congo Basin rainforests under an initiative called the Gabon Infini Project Finance for Permanence (PFP). The agreement will unlock up to \$200m in investments over the next ten years. A specialised criminal court on 12 November sentences former president Ali Bongo Ondimba's (2009-2023) wife, Sylvia Bongo Ondimba, and their son, Nouredin Bongo-Valentin, to 20 years in prison on several charges including embezzling public funds, money laundering and incitement to forgery.

Macron visits Gabon

France's President **Emmanuel Macron** (2017-present) arrived in **Gabon** on 23 November during a tour of east and central Africa, marking his first visit to Gabon since President **Brice Oligui Nguema** (2023-present) came into power, first as junta leader and now as president. The visit was [reportedly](#) timed to mark the end of the transition back to democratic rule, with presidential, legislative and senatorial elections complete. Nguema met Macron in France in May 2024, when he extended the invitation.

France has seen a significant decline in support for its presence in **Africa** in recent years, most notably in **West Africa** where the juntas of **Burkina Faso**, **Mali** and **Niger** have promoted anti-French rhetoric. **Chad** and **Côte d'Ivoire** have also requested French military contingents to leave their countries. However, Gabon and France have [maintained](#) strong ties, with France praising Gabon's transition in adhering to its timelines and building an inclusive government. Aside from diplomatic relations, France still has significant economic interests in Gabon, most notably through **Eramet**, involved in the manganese sector via its subsidiary, **Comilog**. Nguema [announced](#) in June that as of 1 January 2029, the export of raw manganese from the country would be banned, obliging companies such as Eramet to process the mineral locally. France also remains involved in development projects in Gabon, such as the rehabilitation of the **Transgabonais Railway** project, which the **Agence Française de Développement (AFD)** (French development agency) is financing at a cost of €173m (\$199.68m). These vested interests are seen not only in Macron's decision to visit Gabon, but also in his commentary during the visit.

After a tour of development projects and the inauguration of the **French Institute of Gabon**, the two held a private meeting to discuss various issues, following which they held a press conference. During the press conference, Macron stated that the August 2023 coup was a "turning point" in Gabon, [adding](#):

"Know this: France will be there, in its rightful place, that of a friend who can help you succeed with a spirit of respect."

Nguema, also addressing the press conference, revealed some of the issues the two had discussed, including the need for Gabon to diversify its economy, specifically through local processing of raw materials. Nguema called on French companies "to be exemplary" and asked Eramet to ensure that it met the 2029 commitment. Nguema also asked that France provide it with judicial cooperation to help

recover assets embezzled under former president **Ali Bongo Ondimba** (2009-2023), whose wife and son were sentenced, in absentia, to 20 years in prison on various charges (see below).

Overall, Nguema put on a show of welcoming Macron, ensuring a military parade, a 21-gun salute and portraits of the two leaders were displayed in the capital, **Libreville**, alongside the French flag at key landmarks. While no significant agreements came from this visit, it was symbolic and cemented France's significant partnership with Gabon. While Gabon is still heavily reliant on France, it is now also key in helping France maintain a presence in Africa.

Gabon signs climate finance deal

The Gabonese government and **United States**-headquartered non-profit organisation **The Nature Conservancy (TNC)** signed a letter of intent on 18 November to advance an agreement to protect 34,000 square kilometres of Gabon's **Congo Basin** rainforests under an initiative called the **Gabon Infini Project Finance for Permanence (PFP)**. The agreement will unlock up to \$200m in investments over the next ten years, aimed at supporting Gabon's efforts to preserve what TNC [called](#) "*some of the country's most critical carbon and nature ecosystems*".

At this point, \$94m will come from donor funding, and \$86m from government. The PFP [binds](#) the disbursement of funding to government policy changes. TNC notes that the agreement will build on the debt-for-nature swap Gabon completed in 2023, which saw Gabon refinance \$500m in international bonds with new loans, which included dedicated funding for marine conservation.

Some of the [goals](#) of Gabon Infini include raising protected forest coverage from 15% to 30%, enhancing the livelihoods of 100,000 people through community development and increasing climate change resilience in communities most impacted.

The additional financing and the signing of the agreement – the first in Africa – will be [welcomed](#) by the government, which is looking at a tight upcoming financial year. The draft 2026 budget outlines plans to almost double government spending and push debt-to-GDP up to a potential 90%, up from 73% in 2024.

Gabon is highly vulnerable to climate change. The **World Bank's Country Climate and Development Report** for Gabon, published in November, estimates that Gabon could [lose](#) between 3.5% and 5.3% of GDP per year through to 2050 to climate change. Initiatives such as this and the debt-for-nature swap not only provide budgetary assistance but are key steps for the country to take to enhance resilience and mitigate against climate change. Pursuing such agreements will also help Gabon to further develop other eco-related revenue streams, such as carbon credits.

Former first lady and son sentenced in absentia

A specialised criminal court on 12 November sentenced former president **Ali Bongo Ondimba's** (2009-2023) wife, **Sylvia Bongo Ondimba**, and their son, **Noureddin Bongo-Valentin**, to 20 years in prison on several charges including embezzling public funds, money laundering and incitement to forgery. The court sentenced them both in absentia as they are reportedly both currently residing in **London (United Kingdom)**. Following the August 2023 coup, the junta arrested Sylvia Bongo and Bongo-Valentin. They were both imprisoned for 20 months until they were released on bail in May 2025, when they left for **Angola** (see *ARC Briefing Gabon May 2025*).

The court also [fined](#) the two of them 100m FCFA (\$175,475) and ordered Bongo-Valentin to pay 1.2 trillion FCFA (\$2.1 billion) in compensation to the state for financial damages suffered, and the two were also jointly ordered to pay 1 trillion FCFA (\$1.75 billion) to the state for moral damages. During court proceedings, it was estimated that the two have a net worth of 4.9 trillion FCFA (\$8.59 billion), most of which is held in assets including homes in London, Gabon and **Morocco**, two private planes, as well as oil fields. Many of these assets are suspected to have been bought with the embezzled public funds. Both have denied all charges and called it a legal farce.

The [sentence](#) came after two days of trial in which co-defendants and witnesses recounted a system under which the Bongo family misappropriated billions of francs for personal gain. In addition, one of the charges of which Bongo-Valentin was found guilty was 'active corruption' of **Centre gabonais des élections (CGE)** (Gabonese elections centre) members in the 2023 election, with recounts that he paid each commission member 500m FCFA (\$877,378) to ensure his father won the election.

Ten co-defendants [appeared](#) in court on 14 November to face similar charges. The co-defendants are all close associates of the Bongo family, including former presidential aide **Mohamed Ali Saliou**, former chief of staff **Yann Ghislain Ngoulou** and an advisor to Valentin-Bongo, **Cyriaque Mvourandjami**, and were arrested during the coup. On 20 November, the same court [sentenced](#) nine of the ten co-defendants to sentences of between two and 15 years for embezzlement of public funds, corruption and money laundering.

While these court cases have not revealed anything new about the levels of corruption in Gabon, it has finally offered some restitution and accountability. It is also an indication that the new administration is serious about tackling corruption within its systems.

Planner

23 Dec 2025 (**Gabon**) Constitutional court judges sworn in;
2026 (**Gabon**) **Cap Lopez** LNG terminal to start production

Chronology

17 Nov 2025 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Jeune Afrique*. President **Brice Oligui Nguema** approves the election of **Régis Onanga Ndiaye** as the **Assemblée nationale** (national assembly) speaker;

14 Nov 2025 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Direct Infos Gabon*. A delegation of **Russian** investors visits Libreville as part of an exploratory mission aimed at strengthening economic cooperation;

13 Nov 2025 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Direct Infos Gabon*. A **Bloomberg** report, citing **United States (US)** organisations, states that investors consider Gabon one of **Africa's** most vulnerable borrowers and that investor confidence is low;

12 Nov 2025 **Libreville (Gabon)** *AFP*. A specialised criminal court sentences, in absentia, former president **Ali Bongo Ondimba's** wife, **Sylvia Bongo Ondimba**, and their son, **Noureddin Bongo-Valentin**, to 20 years in prison on several charges including embezzling public funds, money laundering and incitement to forgery;

9 Nov 2025 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Le Nouveau Gabon*. Tourism ministry announces a multi-phase national strategy aimed at attracting 600,000 tourists per year by 2029;

9 Nov 2025 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Le Nouveau Gabon*. Government reverses its plan to eliminate petroleum subsidies scheduled for January 2026, citing concerns over social stability and the potential for inflation-driven increases in the cost of living;

5 Nov 2025 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Direct Infos Gabon*. Director of the **African** department of the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**, **Abebe Aemro Selassie**, concludes a working visit to Gabon, meeting with President **Brice Oligui Nguema**, and economy minister **Henri-Claude Oyima**, as Gabon seeks a new IMF programme;

5 Nov 2025 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Ecofin Agency*. Gabon pays 28.3 billion FCFA (\$50m) toward external debt;

4 Nov 2025 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Direct Infos Gabon*. Institutional reform minister **François Ndong Obiang** confirms that 18 ministers must resign from their parliamentary seats before the establishment of the new parliament on 17 November;

3 Nov 2025 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Direct Infos Gabon*. President **Brice Oligui Nguema** meets with **Italy's** prime minister, **Giorgia Meloni**, to discuss bilateral cooperation in several areas;

2 Nov 2025 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Direct Infos Gabon*. Mines and geological resources minister **Gilles Nembe** meet with **Syndicat National des Orpailleurs du Gabon (SYNOGAB)** (national union of gold miners) president **Gaétan Pondot** to discuss formalising the gold sector, improving working conditions and strengthening traceability of gold;

30 Oct 2025 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Le Nouveau Gabon*. The government and **United Kingdom**-headquartered **Pilgrim Exploration** sign two Exploration and Production Sharing Contracts (EPSCs) for the **Ndjila** and **Mpari** blocks in Gabon's sedimentary basin;

30 Oct 2025 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Direct Infos Gabon*. **Agence National des Parcs Nationaux (ANPN)** (national agency of national parks) and the **Wildlife Conservation Society** – supported by the **European Union (EU)** – sign a 2-billion FCFA (\$3.5m) strategic partnership aimed at strengthening the management of ANPN's protected areas

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