

## AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

### Gabon Monthly Briefing February 2026

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#### Gabon Summary 24 February 2026

*The Haute Autorité de la communication (HAC) (high authority for communication) suspends social media channels in Gabon until further notice, stating that some content on platforms risks creating social conflict and destabilising institution. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) confirms again on 18 February that Gabon has not submitted a request for a programme, hampering investor confidence. Mines minister Sosthène Nguéma Nguéma addresses concerns at the Mining Indaba conference in Cape Town (South Africa) between 9 and 12 February related to the government's decision to ban raw manganese exports from 1 January 2029.*

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#### Government shuts down social media amid protest action

The **Haute Autorité de la communication (HAC)** (high authority for communication) announced on 17 February that it would suspend social media channels in Gabon until further notice, stating that some content on platforms risks creating social conflict and destabilising institution. The HAC [added](#) that it was specifically concerned about the spreading of misinformation, cyberbullying and unauthorised disclosure of personal information, concluding:

*"In the case of Gabon, these actions are likely to generate social conflicts, destabilize the institutions of the Republic and seriously jeopardize national unity, progress and democratic gains."*

International internet watchdog **NetBlocks** [confirmed](#) on 18 February that social media platforms including **Facebook**, **WhatsApp**, **TikTok**, **YouTube** and **Instagram** had all been restricted. The ban comes after an increase in social discontent and unrest in Gabon, which the government appears to be trying to contain from spreading. Teachers started [striking](#) in December over pay and work conditions; approximately ten years ago, former president **Ali Bongo Ondimba's** (2009-2023) administration implemented a wage freeze for teachers, which is still in place. In [2013](#), when there was significant strike action by teachers and students, teachers were earning 150,000 FCFA (\$269) per month – with additional allowances for housing and transport – and many complained at the time that their salaries had not increased since 2002. This is still the [minimum](#) wage in Gabon.

In January, following talks between teachers' unions and the government, the government [agreed](#) to clear administrative and pay backlogs that were affecting an estimated 3,000 teachers. The government increased the education ministry's budget from \$237m in 2025 to \$496m in 2026, but there have been no indications of a wage increase. Other civil servants in the health, higher education and broadcasting sectors, are expressing discontent over similar issues. The civil service is one of the main employers in Gabon, [employing](#) approximately 100,000 people.

The government has stated that the social media network suspension is also [intended](#) to put pressure on **United States (US)**-headquartered technological company **Meta** to engage with it. The HAC has been trying to engage with Meta for the past 12 months so it can discuss better regulations around content moderation. According to deputy spokesperson for the presidency, **Jennyfer Mélodie Sambat**, the tactic has been successful and Meta has since contacted them.

The ban is not only a political issue, but has also had [economic](#) ramifications. Mobile operators, including **Moov Africa Gabon Telecom**, **Airtel** and **CanalBox** are losing an estimated 40m FCFA (\$71,847) to 60m FCFA (\$107,771) per day in revenue.

The events have been telling of the government's approach to social unrest. The opposition has criticised the decision, [calling](#) it repressive and a violation of freedoms. The crackdown does not set a positive tone for the start of Nguema's presidency and such a reaction could stoke tensions further.

### No formal request for IMF programme as negotiations for World Bank loan start

The **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** [confirmed](#) again on 18 February that Gabon has not submitted a request for an IMF programme, while confirming that its ten-day staff visit will begin on 25 February. This comes after the IMF told [media](#) on 23 January that a staff mission will visit Gabon in February, noting that the government has not officially requested a loan programme but has increased engagement with the IMF since the recent government reshuffle. In the press briefing on 18 February, the IMF emphasised that engagement remains close and [that](#):

*"The (Gabonese) authorities have announced their intention to work towards an IMF-supported program. Technical discussions are ongoing, but we have not yet received a formal request."*

Market optimism over a potential programme has helped to [bolster](#) Gabon's US-dollar denominated bonds maturing in February 2031. Following credit downgrades, most recently in December by US-headquartered ratings agency **Fitch**, Gabon's credit profile is suffering and an IMF programme would boost investor sentiment. Gabon's increasing debt levels are a significant concern. The latest [statistics](#) from the **Direction Générale de la Dette** (director general of debt), released at the start of February, show that public debt reached 8.54 trillion FCFA (\$15.33 billion) of which 4.2 trillion FCFA (\$7.54 billion) was external debt and 4.34 trillion FCFA (\$7.7 billion) domestic debt. Debt is expected to reach 9 trillion FCFA (\$16.16 billion) in the first quarter of this year.

The upcoming staff visit, which forms part of the IMF's **Article IV** consultations, will focus on public debt management, budget transparency and economic growth forecasts. The outcome of the visit will be a key gauge for markets and international partners about Gabon's debt sustainability, financing requirements and financing priorities.

The IMF's confirmation came after economy minister **Thierry Minko** told media on 19 January that the government would work on an economic growth programme with IMF support and that discussions had progressed but did not clarify if the government is seeking a loan programme. Per the IMF statement, the February mission will take stock of macroeconomic and fiscal developments as well as the government's policy and reform plans.

It remains likely that the government will pursue an IMF programme but is delaying the process for now, as a programme will be accompanied by policy changes, such as subsidy cuts, which would be unpopular. The government is already facing backlash over the teachers' strike and will need to balance the necessity for reforms with the risk of social unrest.

Despite the lack of progress on any IMF programme – which is usually accompanied by a reform programme that helps to bolster fiscal performance and therefore, investor confidence – the government is [reportedly](#) looking to tap a \$500m loan from the **World Bank**. While there has been no official confirmation of the talks, they are reportedly set to continue in the US in coming weeks. The loan could similarly be accompanied by a reform programme, which would also serve as a positive indicator for the investor market.

### Government doubles down on raw manganese ban

The government attended the **Mining Indaba** conference in **Cape Town (South Africa)** between 9 and 12 February, with mines minister **Sosthène Nguéma Nguéma** addressing concerns related to the government's decision to ban raw manganese exports from 1 January 2029 and providing updates on the mining industry. The government issued the directive announcing the ban on 30 May 2025, aimed at generating more value-add and jobs. Gabon is the world's second largest producer of manganese, [exporting](#) 9.4 million metric tonnes worth \$1.7 billion in 2024.

However, one of the greatest challenges in achieving this goal is Gabon's energy supply, which remains unreliable and unable to meet demand, a problem that the addition of energy intensive processing factories to the grid will exacerbate. During the Indaba, Gabonese authorities highlighted that the country is investing in expanding capacity, [namely](#) though hydropower investments, including in the **Kinguélé Aval** dam (35W capacity) and the **Booué** dam (410MW), as well as modernisation of the power network to create extra power.

Nguéma [doubled](#) down on the ban of raw manganese exports, telling the media that energy supply issues will not be accepted as justification for missing the 2029 deadline. He added that all miners must submit implementation timelines and show progress toward meeting the deadline. In addition, Nguéma announced that the **Milingui** and **Baniaka** iron-ore mines are expected to come online this year as the government pushes its diversification strategy into the mining sector. He warned that companies that do not begin construction or production in line with their timelines will lose their licences. The government is [aiming](#) to increase mining's contribution to GDP to over 30% by the mid-2030's; achieving this is likely to be accompanied by revisions of the current mining code, which came into effect in 2019, such as compliance with local beneficiation and even an increase in the state's non-dilutable free carried interest (FCI), which is currently 10%.

## Planner

5 Feb – 6 Mar 2026 **Libreville (Gabon) International Monetary Fund (IMF) staff visit**  
 2026 **Libreville (Gabon) Gabon Global Investment Summit**  
 2026 **(Gabon) Cap Lopez** LNG terminal to start production

## Chronology

23 Feb 2026 **Libreville (Gabon) Gabon Review**. Economy and public investments ministry notes that Gabon's extractive sector contracted by 1.2% in the third quarter of 2025 and by 3% over the first nine months, as falling oil (-4.3% quarterly) and gas output weighed on overall performance amid technical issues and ageing infrastructure;

21 Feb 2026 **Libreville (Gabon) Gabon Review**. **Burkina Faso**-based **Coris Bank International** CEO **Idrissa Nassa** announces plans to establish a long-term presence in Gabon during a meeting with President **Brice Oligui Nguema**;

19 Feb 2026 **Libreville (Gabon) Gabon Review**. The government endorses the communication agency's suspension of social media platforms, describing it as a precautionary measure to curb disinformation and maintain public order, while clarifying that internet access remains intact;

19 Feb 2026 **Libreville (Gabon) Gabon Review**. The government endorses the communication agency's suspension of social media platforms, describing it as a precautionary measure to curb disinformation and maintain public order, while clarifying that internet access remains intact;

18 Feb 2026 **Libreville (Gabon) Gabon Review**. Gabon's media regulator, the **Haute Autorité de la communication (HAC)**, announces the immediate suspension of all social media platforms nationwide until further notice, citing the spread of defamatory content, misinformation, cyberbullying, and threats to public order and national security;

17 Feb 2026 **Libreville (Gabon) Gabon Review**. Gabon and **Indonesia** sign a strategic MoU between **United Arab Emirates**-based **New Energy Metals Holdings Ltd** and **Indonesia**-based **PT Perminas** (under **Danantara**) to jointly develop the **Maboumine** deposit, one of the world's largest sources of niobium and rare earth elements;

16 Feb 2026 **Libreville (Gabon) Gabon Review**. Vice-president **Hermann Immongault** chairs a government meeting to address inefficiencies in development aid, citing poor institutional coordination and insufficient technical capacity as major hurdles;

15 Feb 2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Gabon Review*. France-headquartered **Suez** outlines a comprehensive partnership with Gabon to modernise water infrastructure, improve distribution, reduce losses, and implement wastewater treatment, combining technology with skills transfer to local stakeholders;

12 Feb 2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Gabon Review*. President **Oligui Brice Nguema** arrives in **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** to attend the 39th **African Union (AU)** ordinary session of heads of state and government;

10 Feb 2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Direct Infos Gabon*. Germany-headquartered **Transparency International** ranks Gabon 135<sup>th</sup> in the world out of 182 assessed states in its latest **Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)**, with a score of 29 out of 100;

9 Feb 2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Gabon Review*. Mines minister **Sosthène Nguema** says during a speech at the **Mining Indaba** in **Cape Town (South Africa)** that critical minerals should be defined by each **African** country's own economic and strategic priorities, highlighting manganese, of which Gabon is the world's second-largest producer, and iron ore as central to Gabon's development;

8 Feb 2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Gabon Review*. Gabon signs three strategic memoranda of understanding with companies based in the **United Arab Emirates (UAE)**, as well as the Emirati government, covering gold mining, digital technology, and ports/logistics;

5 Feb 2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Gabon Review*. **Equatorial Guinea's** vice-president, **Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangue**, and officials from its electricity and renewable energies ministry note that Gabon owes Equatorial Guinea about 235m CFA francs (\$423,000) in unpaid bills for imported electricity under their bilateral interconnection agreement;

4 Feb 2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Gabon Review*. Despite a 23% increase in trade with the **United States (US)** in 2024, reaching \$426.2m, Gabon has been excluded from the 2026 **African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA)** programme;

3 Feb 2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Le Nouveau Gabon*. Gabon begins replacing two aging gas turbines at the **Port-Gentil** power plant, each with a new 25 MW turbine, nearly doubling the city's electricity production and addressing decades of frequent outages;

2 Feb 2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** *APA News*. President **Brice Oligui Nguema** meets with a high-level delegation from the **United States (US) Department of State** to discuss a bilateral framework, with a specific emphasis on energy infrastructure and trade development;

2 Feb 2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Gabon Review*. Gabon plans to host a **Chinese**-backed vehicle assembly plant by **ZMEV Limited**, headquartered in **Changsha** (China), starting in 2027, following talks between the company and transport minister **Ulrich Manfoumbi**;

29 Jan 2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Gabon Review*. Torrential rains cause severe flooding across several neighbourhoods in Libreville, prompting the government to convene an inter-ministerial crisis meeting to coordinate emergency relief and prevention measures;

### About Africa Risk Consulting:

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### Getting in touch

Please contact us by email [info@africariskconsulting.com](mailto:info@africariskconsulting.com)

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