

## AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

### Gabon Monthly Briefing March 2026

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#### Gabon Summary 27 March 2026

*The Haute Autorité de la communication's (HAC) (high authority for communication) ban on social media, first announced on 17 February, remains in place, leading to increased pressure from civil society and the opposition. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) confirms on 11 March that Gabon has officially requested a new programme, an increasingly critical support mechanism for the country. The continuing downward spiral of state-owned power and water utility Société d'Énergie et d'Eau du Gabon (SEEG) places pressure on Gabonese and highlights a key operational challenge in Gabon.*

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#### Social media shutdown raises tensions

The **Haute Autorité de la communication's (HAC)** (high authority for communication) ban on social media, first announced on 17 February, has remained in place, leading to increased pressure from civil society and the opposition. The HAC announced in 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 institutions (*see ARC Briefing Gabon Feb 2026*). The ban came in response to an increase in social unrest, which sparked wider concerns over the government's approach to dealing with discontent.

HAC president **Germain Ngoyo Moussavou** gave an [interview](#) on 2 March, affirming that the HAC has not violated the constitution – namely Article 14 that guarantees individual liberties, including the freedom of expression – and that the decision remains a legal and temporary measure. Several opposition parties and political figures hosted a press conference on 7 March, [calling](#) the suspension a democratic setback. Former prime minister and opposition **Ensemble Pour le Gabon (EPG)** leader **Alain-Claude Bilie-By-Nze** addressed the suspension in a separate interview on 17 March, [calling](#) it a "serious and manifestly illegal attack on fundamental freedoms". EPG had filed a legal challenge against the HAC, but the **Libreville** court of first instance [declared](#) itself incompetent to rule on the decision.

Communications and media minister **Germain Biahodjow** [met](#) with the diplomatic corps accredited to Gabon on 19 March to clarify the government's position, and likely to allay fears that it was reverting to oppressive tactics. Biahodjow once again [emphasised](#) that the decision was due to dissemination of hateful, defamatory and other content that undermines Gabon's social stability, while affirming that the government remains committed to freedom of expression and is working to resolve the suspension. He added that a delegation from social media platform **TikTok** was expected in the country to discuss mechanisms to ensure content moderation on the platform.

The **Conseil des ministres** (council of ministers) [met](#) on 26 February to adopt a series of draft decrees aimed at reforming the digital space in Gabon, including amending the 2016 communications code, restructuring the HAC, and introducing new regulations specifically focused on the use of social media. These decrees include the introduction of prison sentences ranging from five to ten years and fines of between 5m FCFA (\$8,797) and 10m FCFA (\$17,595) for posting hateful or defamatory remarks on digital platforms. The interpretation of these regulations will be important as they could be used to crack down on any critical posts of the government online. The decrees also [outline](#) mechanisms for tracking digital identities through stricter regulations on avatars and AI content. Parliament must examine and debate the draft decrees but they are likely to pass given the ruling **Union démocratique des bâtisseurs' (UDB)** majority.

## Government officially requests IMF programme

The **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** [confirmed](#) on 11 March that Gabon had officially requested a new programme, an increasingly critical support mechanism for the country. Gabon is facing a fiscal crunch with **United States (US)**-headquartered ratings agency **Fitch** forecasting that Gabon's debt will reach approximately 85.5% of GDP this year, and 86.7% of GDP in 2027. Gabon's 2021 IMF programme was suspended after the 2023 coup, which negatively impacted its implementation, placing further pressure on finances.

The IMF concluded a ten-day mission to Gabon on 6 March, during which officials made the request, and the parties started discussions around policy reforms and priorities. These negotiations are likely to present some obstacles; as with many IMF programmes, policy reforms such as subsidy and public wage bill cuts are required, which would be politically challenging. This will be a heightened concern following the recent social unrest and discontent (see above). Fitch highlighted this in its ratings downgrade of Gabon in January, [describing](#) the likely requirement of policy changes in a "still volatile political environment" as obstacles.

Other obstacles will include [concerns](#) over Gabon's statistical transparency. An overall lack of data could drag negotiations out, as an audit may be required. The government has set an expansionary – and maybe slightly unrealistic – budget for 2026, which the IMF will almost certainly question. The council of ministers approved a revised 2026 budget of 6.35 trillion FCFA (\$11.57 billion), a significant [increase](#) from the 4.2 trillion FCFA (\$7.53 billion) budget set for 2025. Under the revised budget, the government listed its growth forecast for 2026 as 6.5%, way above the **World Bank's** forecast of economic growth of 2.4% between 2025 and 2027 and the IMF forecast of 2.6% (see *ARC Briefing Gabon Nov 2025*).

However, on a positive note, President **Brice Oligui Nguema** (2025-present) [told](#) a council of ministers meeting on 26 February that concluding an IMF programme is a "strategic necessity" and instructed the economy and finance ministry to accelerate the necessary preparatory work to get a programme signed by May. The IMF confirmed discussions will continue at its spring meetings between 13 and 18 April but the timeline remains uncertain.

Gabon has increasingly had to borrow to service its debt obligations but this tactic is also facing challenges. The country's access to international markets is expensive given its poor credit rating so it has turned to the **Communauté économique et monétaire de l'Afrique centrale (CEMAC)** (economic and monetary community of **Central Africa**) securities market. However, the regional market is also [facing](#) liquidity pressures, so funding is becoming limited. The IMF programme will therefore not only provide relief to Gabon, but also to the regional market, as it will reduce Gabon's reliance on it.

## SEEG's issues remain critical

The continuing downward spiral of state-owned power and water utility **Société d'Énergie et d'Eau du Gabon (SEEG)** is placing pressure on Gabonese and highlighting a key operational challenge in Gabon. President Nguema hosted a meeting to launch a partnership between **French** utility company **Suez** and SEEG on 3 March but largely used his [speech](#) to denounce SEEG for failing to address persistent water and power outages. Energy and water minister **Philippe Tonangoye** presented a 100-day plan in mid-January to address SEEG's longstanding problems, but there has been little progress.

In fact, several local media outlets reported on 18 March that **Turkey**-headquartered power generation company **Karpowership** had [issued](#) a final warning to SEEG on 17 March, warning that it would suspend power production should the government not pay it 15 billion FCFA (\$26.39m) as it continues to miss payment commitments. Karpowership currently provides 150MW for Libreville. In its letter, Karpowership noted that it has extended operations beyond initially agreed deadlines and was unable to continue this without financial compensation.

However, SEEG [released](#) a press release on 18 March denying that any withdrawal had been implemented and assured that there would be continuity of service. These events have sparked confusion, as the Karpowership letter was signed by a representative and addressed to Tonangoye, economy minister **Thierry Minko**, and SEEG's management. At writing, Karpowership is still operating but it remains unclear if the government yielded to the demands or if it was 'fake news' as SEEG has tried to portray.

SEEG's head of studies and new works division, **Claudia Ognanha Opepet**, [confirmed](#) in an interview on 24 March that Libreville's current water infrastructure, being an aged network, is unable to keep up with demand. Opepet noted that for every 100 cubic metres produced, up to 60 is lost to faulty networks. She outlined measures SEEG is taking to address the issue, but if achieved, there will only be improvement from 2027.

SEEG's financial issues have snowballed over the years. Tonangoye [confirmed](#) that while revenue averages between 12 and 13 billion FCAF (\$21m-22m) monthly, once it has serviced its debt of 140 billion FCFA (\$245m), it is only left with between 2 and 3 billion FCFA (\$3.5-5.2m). Suez plans to invest €200m (\$230m) over five years but this is only focused on the water sector. SEEG announced the separation of the water and energy services in June 2025, but this will only be finalised this year.

SEEG managing director **Steeve Saurel Legnongo** [said](#) in an interview on 22 March that between the government and the utility, 500 billion FCFA (\$877m) has been invested over 2024 and 2025 to respond to the issues facing it. However, a 2019 audit carried out by **Electricité De France (EDF)** indicated that SEEG already needed over 475 billion FCFA (\$833m) to renew its electrical equipment alone. The 500 billion FCFA investment should have resolved at least some of the issues but SEEG's ongoing issues indicate otherwise.

## Planner

27 Jun 2026 **(Gabon)** Deadline for political parties to comply with regulations governing political parties under **Law No. 016/2025**

2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** **Gabon Global Investment Summit**

2026 **(Gabon)** **Cap Lopez** LNG terminal to start production

## Chronology

21 Mar 2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Gabon Review*. **International Finance Corporation (IFC)** opens its first office in Libreville to strengthen its local presence and plans to increase investments in Gabon from \$117m to \$400m;

18 Mar 2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Gabon Review*. **Perenco Oil & Gas Gabon** is pursuing an ambitious strategy to transform itself into a national energy hub, expanding beyond oil and gas production to include infrastructure development, gas processing and power generation across Gabon;

13 Mar 2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Jeune Afrique*. Court of first instance drops charges of crimes of morality against former mines minister and **Union pour la démocratie et l'intégration sociale (Udis)** president **Hervé Patrick Opiangah**;

12 Mar 2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** *We are Tech Africa*. Gabon is seeking **United States (US)** financing to add 200MW of electricity capacity to address a 220MW deficit in Libreville and support industrial and energy-intensive digital projects, including a next-generation AI data centre in partnership with US tech firm **Cybastion**;

11 Mar 2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Gabon Review*. Gabon formally requests an **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** programme following a ten-day IMF mission to Libreville, aiming to stabilise public finances and improve budget transparency;

11 Mar 2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Trading View*. Mines minister **Sosthene Nguema** highlights government's support for responsible mineral development during a visit to the **PDAC Convention** in **Canada**, emphasising Gabon's efforts to diversify its economy beyond oil and gas;

10 Mar 2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Gabon Review*. A Gabonese ministerial delegation, including the economy and finance, petroleum and gas, and water and energy ministers, are visiting **Washington (United States)** for a three-day mission to attract US investment in the energy, digital and LNG sectors;

8 Mar 2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Gabon Review*. **Société d'Énergie et d'Eau du Gabon (SEEG)** will launch a large-scale debt recovery campaign in Greater Libreville from 9-31 March, targeting delinquent customers to recoup tens of billions of CFA francs (\$400m) in unpaid electricity and water bills;

4 Mar 2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Jeune Afrique*. President **Brice Oligui Nguema** appoints his half-brother, **Aurélien Mintsa-Mi-Nguema**, as ambassador to **India**;

4 Mar 2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Gabon Review*. President **Brice Oligui Nguema** criticises the national utility, **Société d'Énergie et d'Eau du Gabon (SEEG)**, over persistent power and water outages in Libreville, demanding urgent action and reforms to improve service delivery;

2 Mar 2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Sika Finance*. **Abu Dhabi Ports Group** is actively seeking a strategic position to invest in and manage Gabon's port infrastructure;

2 Mar 2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Africa News*. Gabon says it is in discussions with **United States**-headquartered **Meta** after suspending all social media platforms, citing content that fuels conflict and division;

26 Feb 2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Gabon Media Time*. Government adopts a series of decrees aimed at capping the salaries, bonuses and attendance fees of senior executives in the country's public entities;

25 Feb 2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Gabon Review*. The **International Finance Corporation**, in partnership with the Gabonese government, holds a workshop in Libreville to review and validate a draft leasing law aimed at improving SME access to finance and strengthening the legal framework for credit-bail operations;

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