

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

Gabon Monthly Briefing April 2026

Gabon Summary 21 April 2026

Security agents arrest former prime minister and opposition leader Alain-Claude Bilie-By-Nze on charges related to a debt from 2008. Bilie-By-Nze's party, Ensemble pour le Gabon (EPG), has labelled the arrest arbitrary and contrary to the rule of law, calling it a politically motivated arrest intended to silence the opposition leader. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) World Economic Outlook report, released on 13 April, raises Gabon's debt-to-GDP ratio from 81.96% in its October report to 86.06% while forecasting that its current account deficit will reach 10% of GDP this year, up from 8.5% in 2025, prompting a selloff of Gabon's United States (US) dollar bonds. Singapore-headquartered multinational commodities company Trafigura confirms on 15 April that it has signed a \$1 billion prepayment agreement with Gabon in exchange for the future delivery of oil, a move the economy and finance ministry says will help its cash flow and increase foreign exchange reserves.

Opposition leader and former prime minister Bilie-By-Nze arrested

Former prime minister and opposition leader **Alain-Claude Bilie-By-Nze's** party, **Ensemble pour le Gabon (EPG)**, [reported](#) on 16 April that **Direction générale des recherches (DGR)** (general directorate of investigations) agents had arrested Bilie-By-Nze on 15 April for a 5m FCFA (\$8,984) fine from 2008. In 2008, Bilie-By-Nze – then transport and civil aviation minister – was head of the organising committee for the annual **Festival of Cultures** in Libreville. Service providers claimed they were not paid by the treasury, and although Bilie-By-Nze was acting in a government position, a fine was issued against him. Prosecutor **Fabrice Boungou Mikolo** said Bilie-By-Nze faces [charges](#) of alleged fraud and breach of trust. He was placed in pre-trial detention on 16 April.

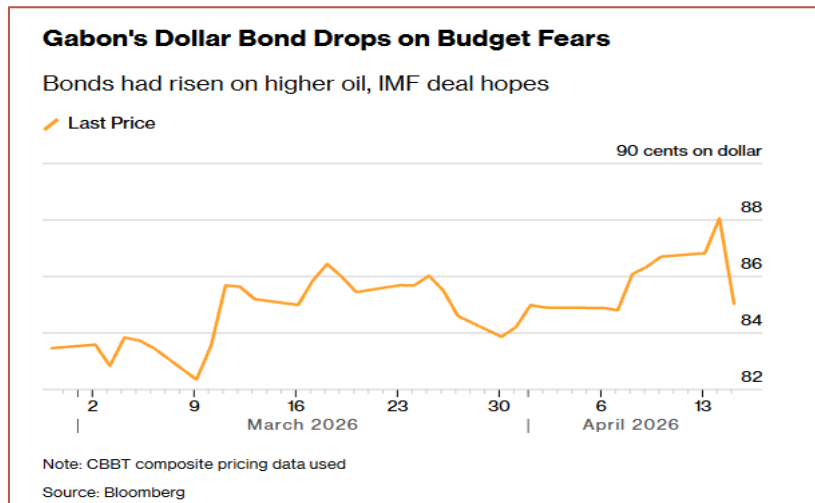
Mikolo added that a citizen had filed the complaint against Bilie-By-Nze, [claiming](#) a portion of what was owed to them for the services rendered. Bilie-By-Nze's lawyer, **Gisèle Eyue Bekale**, noted that the statute of limitations is three years for misdemeanours and ten years for felonies, but as of writing, charges have not been dropped and it appears Bilie-By-Nze is still in detention. He could remain in pretrial detention for up to six months, although this could be extended. Media have reported that a court [summons](#) was issued but Bilie-By-Nze did not appear in court, leading to the DGR's involvement. However, his lawyers have denied that he received any summons.

The EPG has described the arrest as arbitrary and contrary to the rule of law, calling it politically motivated and intended to silence the opposition leader. Bilie-By-Nze served as prime minister from January-August 2023, when President **Brice Oligui Nguema** (2025-present) deposed former president **Ali Bongo Ondimba** (2009-2023). Bilie-By-Nze also served in various ministerial positions under Bongo. He ran in the 2025 election, coming a distant second to Nguema. Bilie-By-Nze is critical of the government, including its social media suspension implemented in February (*see ARC Briefing Gabon Feb 2026*). Bilie-By-Nze [maintains](#) close ties to the Bongo family – Bekale also represents the Bongo family – which has made him a polarising figure. Nevertheless, against the background of the government's clampdown on social media, linked to the teachers' strike, its attitude towards the opposition and dissent is not promising.

Gabon bonds slide as IMF raises debt issues

The **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** on 13 April released its latest **World Economic Outlook** report, [raising](#) Gabon's debt-to-GDP ratio from 81.96% in its October report to 86.06%, while

forecasting that its current account deficit will reach 10% of GDP this year, up from 8.5% in 2025. The report forecasts that the deficit will increase to 11.2% in 2027 and 12% in 2028. The release of this information prompted a sell-off of Gabon's **United States (US)** dollar bonds, making them the worst performing across emerging markets on 15 April.



These projections are more pessimistic than previously forecasted and have led analysts to believe that Gabon was underreporting its debt levels, now revealed in negotiations with the IMF for a new programme. The government requested a new programme during the IMF's recently concluded mission, and discussions have already begun (*see ARC Briefing Gabon Mar 2026*). The latest IMF report appears to have confirmed concerns about Gabon's statistical transparency but it should be noted that the government or IMF has not released official confirmation that there was misreporting. Nevertheless, the markets reacted to the impression that the debt situation is worse and it has created the impression that the government was not transparent. The IMF report will be available for download on 30 April and further information is likely to be revealed in the report.

Gabon attended the IMF and **World Bank's** Spring meetings in **Washington DC (US)** from 13-18 April to continue discussions with officials, with the aim of concluding a programme as soon as possible. No announcements have been made since the conclusion of the Spring meetings, but Gabon has been able to secure \$1 billion in financing from alternative sources, offering some relief (*see below*).

Gabon's large current account deficit is being driven by its ambitious 2026 budget, which saw a near-doubling in spending. The 2026 budget was set at 6.35 trillion FCFA (\$11.57 billion), a significant [increase](#) from the 4.2 trillion FCFA (\$7.53 billion) budget set for 2025 (*see ARC Briefing Gabon Dec 2025*). This increased spending, alongside the seemingly higher than reported debt levels, would have led to the revision of the current account deficit. US-headquartered **Fitch Ratings** noted in an October 2025 commentary that it expected government debt to be close to 90% of GDP, which is closer to the IMF's new forecasts.

Gabon signs prepayment deal with Trafigura

Singapore-headquartered multinational commodities company **Trafigura** [confirmed](#) on 15 April that it had signed a \$1 billion prepayment agreement with Gabon in exchange for the future delivery of oil, a move the economy and finance ministry says will help its cash flow and increase foreign exchange reserves. The economy and finance ministry [added](#) that the \$1 billion will be used to fund investment and social programmes to help improve the country's development agenda.

The agreement was concluded without any form of guarantee or security on the oil cargoes, meaning that Gabon will maintain sovereignty over its oil. This is a key aspect of the deal; many **African** countries are pushing for resource nationalism as they seek to benefit more from their natural resources. This messaging has bled into politics, and is a key message that some governments – such

as those of **Senegal** or **Burkina Faso** – are pushing with citizens. Being able to maintain sovereignty over its oil in a deal such as this is a win for the government.

During the seven-year term of the agreement, Trafigura will act as the exclusive offtaker for Gabon's profit oil. Profit oil is the government's share of oil in a Production Sharing Contract (PSC) after companies have recovered their exploration and production costs. Trafigura [noted](#) in its statement that the oil will be sourced from multiple operators with which the government has PSCs. It added that it has begun a syndication process with international financial institutions, reflecting strong market appetite for the deal. According to media [reports](#), over \$3.3 billion in bids were received.

The funds will be deposited into Gabon's treasury account with the **Banque des États de l'Afrique centrale (BEAC)** (central bank of Central African states), bolstering regional foreign exchange reserves, and helping to stabilise the **Communauté économique et monétaire de l'Afrique centrale (CEMAC)** (economic and monetary community of Central Africa). This is especially prudent as **Cameroon's** finance ministry has [warned](#) that CEMAC's foreign exchange reserves could come under pressure this year as member countries face high debt repayments, external shocks driven by the war in the **Middle East**, which could see higher inflation due the member countries' reliance on imported fuel, as well as trade deficits. The finance ministry noted that higher oil prices may benefit CEMAC, as most of its members are oil producers, but that logistical challenges and higher insurance premiums could offset gains. Gabon has avoided these problems through its deal with Trafigura.

The deal is an example of alternative financing, a trend seen across the continent as countries look beyond traditional financing sources such as regional markets, the World Bank and the IMF. Alternative financing sources are frequently not accompanied by demands for reform, such as subsidy cuts, that are often politically unpopular. While Gabon has officially requested a programme from the IMF, the funding secured by the Trafigura deal may reduce the pressure to conclude a deal quickly and create room for negotiation around reforms the IMF may ask it to implement.

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

19 Apr 2026 **Libreville (Gabon) Gabon Review**. The third **United Kingdom (UK)-Gabon Trade and Investment Forum** takes place, emphasising digital technology as a cornerstone of Gabon's national sovereignty, focusing on infrastructure, cybersecurity and the modernisation of public services;

14 Apr 2026 **Libreville (Gabon) APA News**. Foreign affairs minister **Marie-Edith Tassyla-Ye-Doumbeney** reaffirms Gabon's support for **Morocco's** sovereignty over the **Western Sahara** during a meeting with her Moroccan counterpart, **Nasser Bourita**;

13 Apr 2026 **Libreville (Gabon) Gabon Review**. Gabon is set to launch its first national professional election campaign on 14 April for union representatives, marking a historic reform intended to restructure the union landscape and social dialogue;

13 Apr 2026 **Libreville (Gabon) Tech Africa News**. **Morocco** and Gabon sign a bilateral agreement to boost digital skills and artificial intelligence cooperation, stemming from the recent **GITEX Africa** summit in Morocco;

8 Apr 2026 **Libreville (Gabon) Gabon Review**. President **Brice Oligui Nguema** accepts an official invitation to the upcoming **FOCAC Beijing Summit** following a high-level meeting with the **Chinese** parliament's vice president, **Wu Weihua**;

8 Apr 2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Direct Infos Gabon*. Government grants **Norway**-headquartered **BW Energy** a 25-year extension for its **Dussafu Marin** permit;

8 Apr 2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Afdb*. The **African Development Bank Group** is hosting the 10th **Africa Energy Market Place** in Libreville to develop a national roadmap for Gabon's energy transition and private sector investment;

7 Apr 2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Africa Intelligence*. Treasury orders state-owned **Gabon Oil Co** to settle a tax backlog of \$51.2m stemming from unpaid withholdings on its acquisition of **United Kingdom (UK)**-headquartered **Tullow Oil**'s assets;

6 Apr 2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Direct Infos Gabon*. Government has reportedly paid 7 billion FCFA (\$12.25m) to **Turkey's Karpowership**, which has placed pressure on the government to settle its outstanding arrears of 15 billion FCFA (\$26.89m);

5 Apr 2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Gabon Review*. **China's National People's Congress** vice chairman **Wu Weihua** arrives in Libreville for a three-day visit to strengthen legislative ties and discuss cooperation in energy, taxation and sustainable industry;

3 Apr 2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Direct Infos Gabon*. **United States (US) Department of State** updates its travel recommendations for Gabon, raising its alert level to category two (out of four), which encourages citizens to exercised increased caution when travelling through Gabon;

2 Apr 2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** *The Fintech Times*. Gabon is developing a structured fintech ecosystem through deliberate government coordination and strategic international partnerships, with over \$7 billion in transactions;

30 Mar 2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Gabon Review*. President **Brice Oligui Nguema** attends the inauguration of **Central African Republic's** president-elect **Faustin-Archange Touadéra**;

26 Mar 2026 **Libreville (Gabon)** *Gabon Review*. The **African Development Bank (AfDB)** strengthens its partnership with Gabon, mobilising approximately 600 billion FCFA (\$1.06 billion) to fund 20 major operations in infrastructure and economic diversification;

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