

Côte d'Ivoire: Can the Ouagadougou Agreement Bring Peace?

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The peace agreement signed in Ouagadougou by Laurent Gbagbo and Guillaume Soro on 4 March 2007 is a major turning point in resolving Côte d'Ivoire's armed conflict but is only a first step in the right direction. It is now essential that all Ivoirians who want long-term peace work together to ensure the transitional government effectively delivers identity documents to all citizens, collects all weapons still held by militias, embarks on comprehensive security sector reform and provides a credible election process. The international community stopped Côte d'Ivoire from descending into chaos for four years and must maintain its military, political and financial commitment. The peace process should not be driven only by the ambitions of the men who signed the Ouagadougou Agreement but also by the aim of building lasting peace in Côte d'Ivoire, which is essential for stability throughout West Africa.

Hope was revived when Ivoirians saw Soro, leader of the Forces Nouvelles (FN), appointed prime minister alongside President Gbagbo, whom he had tried to overthrow on 19 September 2002. Security Council Resolution 1721 (1 November 2006) had extended the transition by one year after presidential elections had been twice postponed. It reinforced the powers of then-Prime Minister Charles Konan Banny but it was predictable that it would meet the same fate as earlier resolutions. Determined to retain power, Gbagbo immediately made clear he would not respect it. He had a different plan: direct dialogue with the FN under the auspices of Burkina Faso's President Blaise Compaoré – the rebels' main backer. With the help of President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, Gbagbo renewed ties with his Burkinabè counterpart and was willing to put everything on the table, including making Soro head of government, so long as his presidential powers were guaranteed up to the elections.

Gbagbo recognised that the political stalemate could threaten his interests and took advantage of the widespread apathy. This increased pressure on Soro and the other FN leaders to reach a settlement that would preserve their influence in a unified Côte d'Ivoire. The agreement they signed is more a deal between two sides looking for an escape route that protects their own interests than a compromise which guarantees lasting peace. It does not break with the political practices that led to war in the first place. The old political opposition dating back to the Houphouët-Boigny era appears weakened by this deal but still has an essential part to play in putting an end to the political crisis.

The Gbagbo-Soro partnership must pass the tests of nationwide identification of citizens, voter registration and army restructuring. The Ouagadougou Agreement's major

challenge will be to control tensions resulting from the contradictory strategies of these two and their more extreme supporters. The role of Compaoré, the new mediator, is crucial. Many logistical and financial difficulties inherent in election preparations must also be overcome. International partners must help but not become accomplices in a botched national identification process, security sector reform or elections. For the latter, the post of UN High Representative for Elections must be retained to ensure credibility. Even if correctly implemented, the Ouagadougou Agreement will not in itself end the political crisis that has divided Ivorian society. Civil society organisations must also assume their responsibilities and not allow the country's future to be hijacked again by a handful of power-greedy individuals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To President Laurent Gbagbo and Prime Minister Guillaume Soro:

1. Ensure the strict application of the Ouagadougou Peace Agreement (OPA), making the new Standing Consultative Mechanism the main forum for arbitrating any disputes.
2. Seek UN and other international support to institute mobile courts for issuing identification documents and carrying out the electoral census, disarmament and security sector reform.

To Prime Minister and Forces Nouvelles (FN) Secretary General Guillaume Soro:

3. Take steps to prevent internal FN divisions from becoming a threat to the peace process and engage in dialogue with Ibrahim Coulibaly with a view to his returning from exile and participating in the peace process.

To the Transitional Government:

Identification and the Electoral Process

4. Precisely define in a decree the mandate and responsibilities of each institution involved in the identification and electoral process, including the Independent Electoral Commission, the National Statistics Institute, the National Commission for the Supervision of Identification, the National Identification Office and the Private Technical Operator for identification.
5. Ensure, also as necessary by requesting donor help, that the Independent Electoral Commission and the National Commission for the Supervision of Identification have the technical capacity to supervise the operations of the National Statistics Institute, National Identification Office and Private Technical Operator for identification.
6. Conduct a nationwide public awareness campaign regarding the mobile courts, identification and voter registration, based on a single detailed set of guidelines as provided for in the OPA.

7. Prepare an action plan to ensure election security, with a risk assessment for each constituency.

Disarmament and the Restructuring of the Defence and Security Forces

8. Implement the disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) program and unify the former combatants of all factions into a single body within the framework of comprehensive security sector reform, including short-, medium- and long-term objectives.

9. Ensure that the Integrated Command Centre (CCI) has the logistical capacity to accomplish all military and security tasks mandated by the Ouagadougou Agreement, in particular:

(a) deploying mixed brigades to secure the former zone of confidence; and

(b) providing security for the mobile courts, the identification process and the disarmament and demobilisation of former combatants and militia.

10. Take immediate steps to regularise abnormal situations created by the armed conflict, in particular:

(a) reinstate clear distinctions between uniformed security bodies by clarifying the mandate and chain of command of the military, gendarmerie and police and return all soldiers to their barracks; and

(b) dissolve the Security Operations Command Centre (CECOS) operating in and around Abidjan, remove the military structure governing the west of the country and dismantle all military road-blocks in Abidjan and elsewhere.

To Ivorian Civil Society Organisations:

11. Initiate a nationwide informal dialogue in the form of public debates on issues central to ending the crisis and draw up questions to submit to presidential candidates on issues including:

(a) land ownership legislation and settling land disputes at the local level;

(b) transitional justice for atrocities committed during the conflict, including widespread sexual violence;

(c) constitutional reform including an appropriate balance of powers;

(d) the culture of violence in schools and universities;

(e) the immigration legacy; and

(f) relations with neighbouring countries, ECOWAS, and France.

To the Non-armed Political Opposition:

12. Educate supporters about the OPA, call on them to refrain from violence before, during and after the electoral campaign and publicise reforms they will implement if they win the elections.

To President Compaoré of Burkina Faso:

13. Mediate transparently and impartially any disagreements over the OPA, making use, as often as possible, of the Standing Consultative Mechanism to resolve political disputes.

14. Invite representatives of ECOWAS, the African Union, the UN and donor countries involved in post-conflict economic assistance to participate in the Evaluation and Support Committee.

To the UN Security Council:

UN Mandates and Personnel

15. Renew for one year the mandate of the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (ONUCI) as defined in Resolution 1739 (2007) and authorise additional missions in accordance with the recommendations in the 14 May 2007 report of the Secretary-General, notably to provide support for the Integrated Command Centre, to deploy peacekeepers to observer posts along a "green line" in the former confidence zone and to reinforce the UN mission's presence in the west.

16. Maintain current numbers of UN and French peacekeepers, affirm that gradual withdrawal will take place only after successful presidential and legislative elections, and reconfirm that the peacekeepers are to protect civilians under immediate threat of physical violence and retain complete freedom of movement and initiative to carry out this mission.

17. Renew the mandate of the French Force Licorne as defined in Resolution 1739 (2007).

Sanctions and the Arms Embargo

18. Maintain the current regime of individual sanctions, as provided under Resolution 1572 (2004), and the list of targeted individuals and state that new targeted sanctions may be instituted if the peace process is obstructed.

19. Maintain the arms embargo in its full form as long as the security situation remains fragile.

Follow-up Mechanisms

20. Transform the International Working Group (GTI), into a working group on the transition, open to current GTI members and charged with:

- (a) observing OPA implementation and aiding the government mobilise international support;
- (b) ensuring smooth election preparations in conformity with the OPA; and
- (c) helping the government launch reforms for a return to long-term stability, in particular security sector and public administration reforms.

The Electoral Process

21. Renew the mandate of the High Representative for Elections (HRE) as defined by Resolution 1721 (2006), including to certify all stages of the electoral process, to coordinate international observers within the framework of that role and, in concert with President Compaoré of Burkina Faso, to arbitrate electoral disputes.

22. Direct the ONUCI Electoral Division to give necessary technical help to the Independent Electoral Commission, in accordance with Resolution 1739 (2007).

23. Direct the police and ONUCI to help draw up and implement an action plan for ensuring security during the election process.

To the French Government:

24. Maintain the personnel level of Operation Licorne and its capacity for rapid reaction support of ONUCI at least until the end of the electoral process.

To the European Union, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the African Development Bank and Bilateral Donors:

25. Rapidly provide financial and technical assistance as needed by the government to execute fully all operations pertaining to the OPA.

Dakar/Brussels, 27 June 2007