

# WARN POLICY BRIEF

CRISIS IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE

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## ACCRA III PEACE PROCESS: PROSPECTS & CHALLENGES

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### INTRODUCTION

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All eyes and ears are focused on the Ghanaian capital, Accra, that is fast becoming the veritable gateway to West African stability. The expectations are high. The matter at hand is the protracted Ivorian crisis that some observers and even actors in the conflict have termed 'the summit of the last chance'. To the contrary, WARN believes that the Accra Summit dubbed "Accra III" presents a golden opportunity to right many wrongs, both for protagonists and mediators. Accra III should therefore be seen as an opportunity to uphold reality as against rhetoric; to come to the realization that it has not only been an Ivoro-Ivorian crisis only, but also a regional conflict; that the Ivorian war is as politically induced as it is economically (with varying interests).

Accra III is also a unique forum to honestly accept the fact that though an African problem (in the words of Michel de Bonnecorse, Adviser on African Affairs to French President, Jacques Chirac), French political and economic interests have made France a critical stakeholder; the UN authority is once more being challenged and failure to act decisively would make the world body lose credibility.

This policy brief explores the opportunities for a breakthrough in the ensuing impasse; the challenges and constraints; and options for response. WARN believes that Ivorian politicians and their god fathers must genuinely eschew political greed, manipulation, and intrigues and make appropriate concessions backed by political will. An adage goes that one can take a horse to the stream but cannot force it to drink. Just as WARN has proposed in two previous briefs, it would be a noble sacrifice and honour to the Ivorian nation if the key protagonists 'who have held Cote d'Ivoire hostage'<sup>1</sup> could renounce their intention to contest the October 2005 elections, and allow the ground for new leaders to lead a reconciled Cote d'Ivoire. Enough carrots and sticks should be carried to

#### WEST AFRICA EARLY WARNING NETWORK (WARN)

The West Africa Early Warning Network (WARN) is an integral part of the West Africa Preventive Peacebuilding Program co-ordinated by the **West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP)**. WANEP through its WARN Program is setting the stage for a civil society-based early warning and response network in Africa.

WARN covers the entire Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) sub-region including Cameroon and Chad. Our main focus has been the Mano River Basin countries of Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia, and Côte d'Ivoire. We are now expanding to cover the entire sub-region.

WANEP has entered into an agreement with ECOWAS through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in the framework of capacity building in Conflict Prevention. One of the goals of this agreement is to interface WARN with the ECOWAS Early Warning Systems.

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<sup>1</sup> In the words of the Ivorian clergy, Cardinal Agre of Abidjan who in 2001 told the truth by deploring the fact that four individuals have held the whole nation hostage (Late Guei, Bedie, Gbagbo and Ouatarra).

Accra and no stone left unturned.

### **Opportunities for Peace**

Here are some highlights of strong points that have instilled renewed hope and possibilities for a major breakthrough. These indicators and developments include (but not limited to):

*Renewed international pressure:* Since the infamous March 25, 2004, the attempted protest march and the brutal suppression by security and parallel forces, there has been renewed pressure on Ivorian protagonists to end the over 24 months of dilly dallying. The international community went further with the threat of sanctions on those who are seen to be the stumbling blocks to the peace process. Financial institutions like the IMF and World Bank are tightening the rope around President Gbagbo's neck, a move that has forced the hitherto reluctant President to press for more reforms in line with the Linas-Marcoussis agreement. The 'New Forces' (*Force Nouvelles*) who had taken upon themselves to pile conditions on the pending disarmament process want to be seen as complying.

*Nigerian leadership of AU:* President Olusegun Obasanjo's leadership of the continental body - African Union (AU) has aroused more hope and expectation. Obasanjo's forward looking approach and a determined pro-African foreign policy to change the 'face of Africa' as already demonstrated in his few years of marketing the NEPAD initiative is a clear indication that he would leave no stone unturned. Nigeria would use its diplomatic prowess as the giant of Africa to push for an end to the Ivorian imbroglio, as she has done in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Nigeria's excellent relations with Ghana, current Chair of the ECOWAS Authority is an added advantage.

*UN Secretary General's presence:* The presence of Kofi Annan in Accra is a great bolster to the process. Annan's persistent frankness and determination to put an end to a crisis that risk torpedoing the entire UN Missions in West Africa, gives hope and expectation.

*Belligerent Fatigue and disappointments:* Both sides of the Ivorian divide seem tired of fighting as the fatigue syndrome seems apparent. Added to this, is the disappointments of both 'rebel' followers and sympathisers who did not expect a two year long struggle, and also the 'loyal' patriots who are accusing their patrons of neglecting them. Unfulfilled promises, a bleak future and prolonged hard life especially in rebel controlled territory have put the population within the northern controlled half of the country in a state of dejectedness. Some Abidjan patriots equally want to opt out of the 'street war'.

*Realities of crisis exhumed:* The realities of the Ivorian crisis have continued to unfold<sup>2</sup>. The sad dimension is that the derailed "patriotic" Trojan horse is the associated economic pillage, mismanaged resources all in the name of war efforts. More appalling is the pillage of the BCEAO (Central Bank of West African States) in Bouake (twice), Man, and Korhogo purportedly organized by leadership of the *Forces Nouvelles*<sup>3</sup>. The alleged 300 billion Franc CFA contributions by cocoa farmers towards the war effort has raised more questions than answers. The ordinary Ivorian who has time to reflect is

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<sup>2</sup> See ICG report No. 82 ([www.icg.org](http://www.icg.org)), "Cote d'Ivoire: No Peace in Sight", (Dakar/Brussels), July 12, 2004)

<sup>3</sup> See *L'Inter* and *L'Intelligent d'Abidjan* newspapers of July 22, 2004.

asking whether this war was necessary, whether the war lords have not taken advantage of the situation to enrich themselves. After all, in war no one is accountable to any body for it is a matter of life and death. Genuine patriotic combatants are therefore being induced to sue for peace to save their country from the claws of economic exploiters and opportunists.

*Revitalization of the Neighbouring relations:* The just ended Ivoir-Burkinabe and Ivoir-Malian mixed commissions on common issues have restored hope and given a level of confidence that the impasse. This gives the hitherto cold relations, significant warmth that Accra III would compliment.

### **Challenges and Threats**

*Parliament undermined by Marcoussis:* One great oversight of the Marcoussis Agreement was the 'undermining' of the Ivorian people's representatives. Believing that Parliament has no powers, Marcoussis stipulated that Parliament would be 'made' to validate the decisions by passing the necessary laws on land, nationality and eligibility considered to be at the core of the Ivorian crisis. The reality has proved this simplistic arrangement wrong.

Ivorian parliamentarians have been making a point by saying that they are not rubber stamps of either the executive or the international community. That is the message from Abidjan. That even in an African democracy, parliament should play a role in a democracy. Another reality is that it is not the FPI party or Gbagbo that is majority in Parliament but the former ruling party, PDCI-RDA of Henri Konan Bedie. Amendments made on the Marcoussis laws have therefore not been in the 'spirit of Marcoussis'.

*Lucrative war economy:* The growing lucrative war economy that is benefiting a select few on both sides of the divide have encouraged an attitude of favouring protraction to reap more dividends from the crisis.

*The patriots' phenomenon:* The rebellion that has engulfed the northern half of the country has used patriotism to justify their act. The Abidjan and other southern youth and women patriots have also claimed patriotism in their stiff resistance against what they perceive as an international conspiracy against the Gbagbo regime. How to deal with the parallel patriotic claims is a challenge to genuine reconciliation.

*'Parallel Forces' and 'Uncontrolled Elements':* As intriguing as the patriotic claims above is the parallel forces within the regular Armed Forces (FANCI) that were cited as real actors in the attempted March 25 suppression. The recent news of attacks across the dividing line by uncontrolled elements has also highlighted the dangerous twists of the Ivorian crisis. Observers have even questioned why the French have also maintained 'parallel forces' (Operation Licorne) along side the ONUCI.

*Taming the monster:* The nefarious activities of the parallel forces and uncontrolled elements, have just demonstrated how difficult it is (and would be) to contain extreme tendencies within the rebel and Abidjan patriots (referred to as Gbagbo's militia). Taming the 'monster we created' must be the preoccupation of peace makers as attention focuses on the post Accra III scenario in Cote d'Ivoire. A backlash of the decisions taken in Accra would be disastrous if the leadership of the extremist tendencies is not adequately tamed.

*2005 electioneering tactics and strategies:* The politicians of Cote d'Ivoire are so keen at winning the October 2005 elections at all cost that they are ready to do anything to attain their objectives, even at the cost of the peace process. The controversy surrounding parliament's amendments of the proposed nationality law was the electoral interpretations given to it. Giving nationality to about 3 million foreign nationals was seen as swelling the votes of the opposition RDR party of Alassane Ouatarra, meaning handing the contentious Presidency to ADO on a gold platter. Maintaining the status quo would on the other hand be of great advantage to the PDCI-RDA and FPI of Bedie and Gbagbo respectively.

*Shift from Personalising the Ivorian Crisis:* The international community has persistently viewed the Ivorian crisis from the prism of personalities. Attempts to resolve the crisis have tended to please one leader or the other, with little considerations for the supreme interest of Cote d'Ivoire as a people and a nation. There is therefore need for a courageous shift from this angle.

*Implosion within rebel ranks:* The *New Forces* hitherto described as disciplined and highly organized have started to disintegrate. Signs of anarchy, leadership struggle and infighting, extremist tendencies, looting and pillage, settlement of scores, elimination of opponents, and extortion at so called check points...have become the new trade mark of the rebellion. This may worsen if the stalemate protracts. Besides, the tendency to give excuses and 'conditionalities' is a major threat to the disarmament process. No DDR ever succeeded if warlords do not have a strong central command and control over fellow combatants.

*Emergence of another rebellion?* An Ivorian tabloid on July 23 reported that one Pastor Faustin Leka, President of the Ivorian Democratic Party (PID) had alleged that there was a new rebellion simmering in the Abengourou-Akoupe-Agnibilekrou zone (north east of the country) called *Front de Liberation Republicaine* (FLR)<sup>4</sup>. Notorious for having 'predicted' similar events in the past, Ivorians have reason to worry as rumours in war situations are as important as they are dangerous.

### **Options for Action**

- *Political will:* Peace scholars and pundits are of the opinion that Accra III may likely usher in a new dawn in the Ivorian reconciliation process and open the way for effective disarmament. But the only concern is the bad faith, calumny, demagoguery of Ivorian politicians and their external mentors. The political will of the key actors must be sought and pursued during and after Accra III.
- *Supreme sacrifice:* WARN had variously suggested that President Gbagbo, Alassane Ouatarra, Henri Konan Bedie, (and by extension Guillaume Soro) in the supreme interest of Cote d'Ivoire should all decline their intentions to run for the Presidential elections in 2005. Though a politically incorrect proposal, efforts at arriving at this decision would put an end to the deadly power struggle in Cote d'Ivoire. Incentives and ceremonial positions could be awarded the gentlemen. That would be the magic wand supreme sacrifice!
- *Impunity sanctioned:* By threatening and effectively sanctioning those who have committed heinous crimes in the Ivorian war of self destruction, and even those who

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<sup>4</sup> *L'Intelligent d'Abidjan* news tabloid, July 23, 2004.

had enjoyed dragging the peace process on the mud, the international community gave the right signals. It should be made clear that impunity would not be tolerated and everyone must be made accountable for the crimes and destruction Cote d'Ivoire has suffered. The carrot and stick policy should be used appropriately. More assertiveness and guarantee of enforcement should be the strategies of Accra III.

- *More collective concessions, less political rewards:* The past tradition where peace processes were seen to be grounds for the reward of rebellion should be cautiously guarded against. Accra III must be seen to have made more collective concessions and less political rewards. It should not be seen as yet another opportunity to share political portfolios. The semblance of rebel dictated peace processes should be avoided astutely lowering the rebel flag in the peace process to avoid sending wrong signals to thousands of disgruntled youths out there.
- *Cautious diplomatic language:* It is clear that declarations like 'Marcoussis is the only way out', 'it is an Ivorian affair' that must be resolved by Ivorians alone are statements that have limited the peace options. Equally, declarations of the Gabonese President Omar Bongo<sup>5</sup> vis-à-vis ECOWAS, media statement by Soro Guillaume and other Ivorian actors (including President Gbagbo) been anything but diplomatic and friendly. The wrong use of language has gone a long way to stall the peace. Accra III and its aftermath must manage the crisis by taming the tongue.
- *Restrain media declarations by leaders of Union Government:* Since the media play a dual role of builder and spoiler, leaders of the Government of Reconciliation that would emerge from Accra III should be restrained from making inflammatory media declarations.
- *Disarming the pen and tongue:* The missiles, salvos and stinkers emitted by the print and audio media in Cote d'Ivoire, have been as deadly as they have been destructive. They have seriously fuelled and help protract crisis. Some French media too have not been better, and thus have no lessons for their Ivorian counterparts. Hatred, deliberate exaggerations and alarming reports, manipulations, incitation to violence and revenge...all discredited the "Fourth Power" throughout the Ivorian crisis. It is thus time to disarm the pen and the tongue through appropriate programmes and strategies. Such salvos should be transformed into instruments for national reconciliation and reconstruction.
- *Go beyond the person:* The emotional instincts have clouded the minds of some analysts and by implication peace makers in the Ivorian crisis who have tended to focus the peace process from the prism of Alassane D. Ouattara and Laurent Gbagbo. By seeking to impress these two political personalities, the overall Ivorian interest has been sacrificed. Accra III must go beyond the individual-interest-induced peace process. Cote d'Ivoire would still continue after the present political gentlemen quit the scene and perhaps even in a better state.
- *Address migrant population issue at source:* The peace process must be seen as fair and objective. While seeking to address migrant plight in host country, a deeper

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<sup>5</sup> Strongly believed to be a Chirac's man in the Accra III peace talks. Also read comments from Ivorian papers on website ([www.abidjan.net](http://www.abidjan.net)).

effort should be made to arrest the massive exodus by creating conducive environment in “migrant exporting” countries.

- *Appropriate response measures* should be envisaged in anticipation of a backlash if Accra III does not favour the radical camps (rebels as well as the militias).

**Conclusion:** Accra III may not be the last chance for peace as echoed by politicians in Abidjan and some quarters in the West. It should be seen in the framework of the real beginning of the healing process; a shift from emotionally induced processes to pragmatism and assertiveness. With the promising leadership of President Obasanjo of Nigeria on the steering wheels of the AU machinery and the focused efforts of President Kuffour of Ghana (Chairman, ECOWAS Authority), coupled with UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan’s resolve to seal the coffin on the Ivorian crisis, Accra III provides a great opportunity for an ‘African solution to an African problem’. While Accra hosts the African peace makers, the greatest challenge of the day is the pending threat of violent conflict in the continent. Flawed elections seem to be the bane of African democracy. As the electoral calendar stretches from Cameroon (October 2004) to Cote d’Ivoire (October 2005), Accra III must resolve that never again would Africa be allowed to wallow and submerge in senseless conflicts because of political greed of a few individuals. We must ask ourselves why people resort to the use of arms in resolving political issues.