



POST OCTOBER 30, 2005: "MAKING THE HORSE DRINK"

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INTRODUCTION

In its official communiqué on October 6, 2005, the 40th Meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the Africa Union (AU) noted that significant progress has been achieved in the peace process in Côte d'Ivoire through the implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis, Accra III and Pretoria Agreements (Pretoria I&II) and maintained that additional measures are required "to expedite the implementation of the outstanding issues, in particular the dismantling and disarmament of the militias, the DDR and the creation of conditions for holding free, fair and transparent elections, based on the road-map to elections elaborated by the AU Mediator"¹.

While paying tribute to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for the constant efforts to promote peace and reconciliation in Côte d'Ivoire, the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) recognized President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa's untiring efforts in the service of peace and reconciliation in Côte d'Ivoire and reaffirmed his role as AU Mediator. President Mbeki was commended for the progress achieved in the implementation of the relevant provisions of the Linas-Marcoussis and Accra III Agreements signed on 24 January 2003 and 30 July 2004, respectively. Reaffirming the "commitment of the AU to the respect of the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and unity of Côte d'Ivoire, in conformity with the relevant principles enshrined in the Constitutive Act of the African Union, as well as the imperative need for the speedy reunification of Cote d'Ivoire,"² the African leaders upheld that the Linas-Marcoussis, Accra III and Pretoria

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 and community-based early warning and response network in Africa.

WARN is setting up structures and would soon cover the entire Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) sub-region--Benin, Togo, Nigeria, Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, including Cameroon and Chad.

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 System.

¹ Final Communiqué, Peace and Security Council, 40th Meeting, 6 October, 2005, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (PSC/AHG/Comm(XL)).

² Ibid

Agreements remain the appropriate framework for the peaceful and lasting solution to the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire. Key decisions emerged (discussed in detail below as critical peace and/or conflict factors).

Meeting in New York, a week after (October 14), the United Nations Security Council endorsed the AU decisions. Analysts on the one hand see the recent developments as diplomatic victory for the AU, Mbeki and President Gbagbo. On the other hand, there are those who perceive the developments as futile, especially as the (former) rebels have quasi dismissed the AU initiative as short of expectation and have cast doubts to the mediation of President Mbeki.

Whatever the view, the certainty is that the stakes for peace in Cote d'Ivoire remain high and it is clear that it is one thing to take the horse to the stream and another to make it drink. This policy brief focuses on the AU-UN decisions in the context of the current dispensation and the implications for the overall peace process. We specifically attempt to:

- Critically examine the AU Peace & Security Council Decisions and how the nuances involved would militate for or against peace efforts;
- Envisage possible scenarios between now and the planned Presidential Elections; and
- Recommend Options for Response.

Critical Factors for Peace and Conflict: An Analysis

Most significant was the endorsement by the AU of the observation of the ECOWAS Extraordinary Summit of 30 October 2005, on the end of the Presidential mandate of President Laurent Gbagbo and the impossibility, acknowledged by all Ivorian parties, of organizing presidential elections on the scheduled date (October 30, 2005). Consequently, the PSC decided to prolong the Ivorian transition beginning 31 October 2005 for a period not exceeding twelve (12) months with the following accompanying decisions³:

- *President Gbagbo shall remain Head of State during the above-mentioned period.* While this was hailed by President Gbagbo's supporters as a diplomatic victory and vindication of the President who has given all the concessions and done his own part of the peace deal, his opponents took offence. The G7 coalition led by the rebels have been advocating for a transition without President Gbagbo, blaming the non-implementation of the peace process on Gbagbo. Pundits of the Ivorian crisis three years after now believe that a media strategy, an apparent massive international support had made the attacker play the political game on a more legitimate ground than the attacked. That President Mbeki convinced President Gbagbo has been more responsive to the peace process than his opponents is a major divergence from previous views. The one year prolongation of the Gbagbo Presidency can therefore aptly be perceived as reward. However, the timidly adhered opposition rally of October 30 calling for resignation of President Gbagbo foretells difficult times ahead. By insisting on Gbagbo's departure, the President's opponents are buttressing the zero sum option-no peace as long as Gbagbo is President. This in turn would harden the stance of the President's Youth Patriots who have decried the 'many rewards' and concessions accorded the rebels and opposition bloc. Great lessons and caution must be taken not to let things out of control.

³ The PSC Decisions are italicized. The comments and analysis that follow are ours (WANEP).

- *A new Prime Minister acceptable to all the Ivorian parties signatories to the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement shall be appointed. The Government, which he will lead, shall be composed of personalities proposed by the Ivorian parties signatories to the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement.* The idea is very welcome since the former Government of National Reconciliation of Seydou Diarra was paralyzed not just because the Prime Minister was not accepted by all but perhaps due to the apparent non-performance. Is it the personality of the PM that is at the core of the present stalemate or the poor job description or the difficult task at hand? Shortly after the 2001 Forum on National Reconciliation described as an example of Africans solving their problem in a brotherly manner without ‘foreign interference’, a government of national unity was formed with the PDCI of Henri Konan Bedie, RDR of Alassane Ouattara and other political parties including the civil society represented. Yet barely a month after, the coup d’état cum rebellion was launched and today, the G7 constitutes an alliance of all the anti-Gbagbo forces. Whether this is just a marriage of convenience is a matter of conjecture. Yet, the issue is how the peace process would be implemented. What are the enforcement guarantees? What leverage or margin of manoeuvre would such a person command? Would whoever is the new PM be free from manipulation from either sides of the divide? Who would he/she be answerable to? What would be the constitutional implications of naming a ‘Super’ Prime Minister?
- *The Government shall continue to discharge the responsibilities and tasks assigned to it by the Linas-Marcoussis and Accra III Agreements. The Ministers shall be accountable to the Prime Minister, who shall have full authority over his cabinet.* This is very critical to the peace process. The challenge of maintaining cabinet cohesion and discipline is onerous. Under Seydou Diarra, Ministers walked out and came back at will. Ministers insulted the Head of State at will, went on trips and became media stars at the detriment of the PM who spent time almost lamenting or quenching the political fire of a divided cabinet. The idea of “full authority” is surely the source of future quarrels and stalemates. We do not foresee a miracle or an ideal cabinet, but discipline and good will must be the watch words. Monitoring and application of sanctions must be institutionalized by the International Working Group (IWG).
- *The Prime Minister shall not be eligible to stand for the elections to be organized, in accordance with the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement.* This clause may soon become a source of weakness. Individuals who know they are having their last opportunity to preside over the destiny of a nation may soon be tempted to see their positions as indirect “investments” and may turn out to be the most corrupt leaders. Since in Africa, access to power and decision making is now interpreted as access to source of wealth, except incentives are provided for such service, the idea may soon be a passport for mediocrity and behind the curtain corruption. The experience in Liberia is telling. This is crucial for a country like Cote d’Ivoire with massive economic potentials, including oil.
- *In order to assist the Government in the implementation of its programme and consolidate and strengthen the existing follow-up Mechanisms, an International Working Group (IWG) shall be established at ministerial level, which shall meet once a month in Côte d’Ivoire to*

evaluate, monitor and follow-up the peace process, including the roadmap agreed upon in Pretoria and any other subsequent agreements, by stating the degree of cooperation of the parties and other actors concerned, their respect of the commitments made and, if necessary, any attitude likely to hamper the successful conclusion of the peace and reconciliation process in Côte d'Ivoire, and make appropriate recommendations to the AU Peace and Security Council and to the UN Security Council. The IWG shall receive regular reports from the Mediation Group. One of the missing links in the Ivorian process seems to have been the lack of a comprehensive monitoring process. The largely polarized media and apparent inability of civil society to rise above the entrenched and polarized situation has not helped the matter. It is hoped that the IWG would put people permanently on ground, monitor the media objectively, both local and international media. Findings from such monitoring should be made public so that commensurate pressure should be meted on defaulters. Delay in publishing previous findings such as the UN Human Rights field mission that visited neighbouring countries and attempts by some French media to push forward their own version of events have been controversial as they have been intriguing. Perhaps this is an opportunity for sub-regional organizations like WANEP to play a more consistent role in the monitoring process as part of early warning process.

- *The IWG shall be chaired by the Foreign Minister of Nigeria, in his capacity as the representative of the Chair of the AU. The office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, the Special Representative of the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS in Côte d'Ivoire and the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission in Côte d'Ivoire shall serve as secretariat. The Secretariat shall be coordinated by the United Nations.* One of the critical issues in the IWG is the necessity to work in tandem with one another and with existing UN and international organizations. Though not usually visible, there have been divergences that may have retarded the peace process. For instance, the AU Libreville Communiqué of January 2005 did not make mention of Operation Licorne as a separate force and in retort, the French (in their strategic position as drafters of UN Security Council Resolutions on Cote d'Ivoire) made sure the subsequent UN Security Council Resolution always read ONUCI (UN Peacekeeping Forces in Cote d'Ivoire) and Licorne Forces. There is no much to believe that Paris has not been comfortable with the South African mediation and may have vested interests in the outcome of the peace process.

- *The IWG shall be comprised of the following: Benin, Ghana, Guinea, Niger, Nigeria, South Africa, France, United Kingdom, USA, United Nations, African Union, ECOWAS, European Union, the International Organisation of the Francophonie, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.* The Ivorian Government of President Gbagbo has consistently accused some West African countries of their involvement in the crisis that has divided the country into half for more than three years now. The new African composition of the IWG shows that the AU was sensitive of this accusation which unfortunately has not been taken into consideration nor has been investigated. Perhaps one of the missions of the IWG would be to ascertain what went wrong in the implementation from the part of the international community, besides the recalcitrance of the protagonists. Perhaps is also time to include West African Civil Society as part of IWG.

- *The day-to-day mediation shall be undertaken by the following representatives of the IWG: the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General, the High Representative of the United Nations for elections in Côte d'Ivoire, the Special Envoy of South Africa, the Special Representative of the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS and the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission in Côte d'Ivoire. The Mediation Group shall be chaired by the Special Envoy of South Africa, as the representative of the AU Mediator. The added value of this mediation shall be their capacity to identify the 'key spoilers' and engage them directly. It is easy for instance to insist on disarmament but the difficulty is convincing the fellow combatants to lay down arms after years of lofty promises. Besides the DDRR general incentives, perhaps more creative incentives may be placed on table, but at what cost?*
- *Decides that the Ivorian parties shall be invited, as soon as possible, to a Forum. This meeting, which shall be opened to the civil society, including the traditional leaders and the private sector, shall be co-chaired by President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria and President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa; for National Dialogue in Yamoussoukro. The idea of Forum is good and imperative. However, it would be good to critically examine why the 2001 Forum on National Reconciliation failed to reconcile the country. Lessons learned would inform the proceedings and outcome of the planned forum. We want to stress that reconciliation would remain a process, rather than an event. It is becoming a fact that Ivorian politicians may talk, sign and embrace around the peace table but all that being window dressing. It would be germane to actively involve women groups (even if polarized), members of the clergy and clerics from major religions, youth groups, publishers and editors of national tabloids more than politicians in Yamoussoukro National Dialogue.*
- *Reaffirms its support to individual measures provided in paragraph 9 and 11 of United Nations Security Council resolution 1572 (2004) of 15 November 2004 and subsequent resolutions relevant to the commitments made by the Ivorian parties, and expresses satisfaction at the envisaged visit to Côte d'Ivoire of the Chairman of the UN Security Council Sanctions Committee. Sanctions as a dissuasive or deterrence policy are good. However, critics say such sanctions can only work well if the targets were government officials. President Gbagbo had once downplayed this saying he does not have any foreign account and spends his holidays in Yamoussoukro. Except some of his close collaborators, sanctions especially travel ban and freezing of accounts would be meaningless to Mr President. On the other hand, if the target is the rebel camp and opposition, most of who reside abroad and operate lucrative foreign accounts according to news tabloid reports, the effects could be evident. However, links between the rebellion and neighbouring and foreign powers have not been investigated and ascertained. By exploring such links, the peace process may run into trouble waters by daring to plunge into the politically incorrect direction that seems to have been deliberately ignored or waved aside.*
- *Affirms its support to the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (ONUCI) and requests the United Nations Security Council to provide ONUCI with all necessary means to enable it effectively discharge its mandate and to further consider authorizing a substantial increase of its strength. A strengthened ONUCI is an imperative for effective disarmament and implementation of sanctions. However, the Licorne forces that have been rocked by minor but significant challenges like the attack of some of its elements on a local bank, excesses of*

firearm usage as was the case in November 2004 leading now to suspension a former Commander of Licorne forces may be assisted by other contingents in its robust intervention role. Some UNAMSIL forces disengaging in Sierra Leone may be relocated to Cote d'Ivoire.

- ❑ *Decides to dispatch a high level delegation to Côte d'Ivoire comprising President Olusegun Obasanjo, Chairman of the AU, and President Thabo Mbeki, AU Mediator, to meet with President Gbagbo and other Ivorian Parties with respect to the implementation of this decision.* This would help attenuate worries by observers who have been quick in seeing a tussle for leadership in the moves by ECOWAS to convene a mini-summit in Abuja prior to the October 6, AU PSC meeting in Addis Ababa. President Gbagbo feels that some ECOWAS Member States are parties (direct or indirect) to the conflict and therefore seems reluctant to accommodate an ECOWAS lead role in the peace process. The Obasanjo-Mbeki joint delegation is significant in harmonizing views that some pundits interpreted as scramble for African leadership for as it stands, he who finally brokers the peace deal in Cote d'Ivoire equally bags significant political and diplomatic "red feathers" (dividends).

INTERVENING FACTORS AND WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY

In the backyard of these unfolding events, strategies, manoeuvres and political vicissitudes, there are indeed intervening factors that may augur well for the peace process. WARN in its strategy have always highlighted such windows of opportunity that may seem far fetched in the eyes and minds of key policy and decision makers.

- ❑ *The Opium called Football:* Since the outbreak of hostilities, nothing has rallied Ivorians around a common vision and ignited a patriotic spirit like football. Led by the darling Didier Drogba, one of the world's top strikers and most expensive soccer star, the Ivorian populace especially the youth on both sides of the divide forgot that there was something like war. This atmosphere that characterized the eve of the "Indomitable Lions" of Cameroon and the "Elephants" of Cote d'Ivoire encounter which the Elephants lost was described by many (including us at WANEP given our knowledge on football and national mobilization) as a missed opportunity to end the three year war. While Gbagbo's opponents were 'jubilant' that their ace rival did not reap from this 'manna' of leadership legitimacy, the gods of football were still with the Ivorians. Two weeks after in Sudan, the Elephants got their qualification to the Germany 2006 FIFA World Football Competition for the first time in history. It was not only political recuperation for President Gbagbo; it was proof that where politics has failed, football can succeed. As the African Nations Cup kicks off in January in Egypt and World Cup in Summer in Germany, an opportunity is provided to rally the nation around a common vision, destiny and purpose. Perhaps politicians would learn from the unity in diversity in the team and the grandeur and repute the boys are bringing to the nation. Indeed the football is a great opportunity that the peace process should draw on immensely.
- ❑ *War Fatigue:* There is no gainsaying to the fact that war fatigue has started taking its toll. No one, neither on the rebel camp nor the government supporters or the international community could predict that for more than three years, the mighty elephant was to remain in the indecisive situation of no war no peace. The social and economic cost of the crisis is becoming unbearable. The situation is worst in the rebel held half of the country where

almost nothing seems to work, from health, schools and social facilities like water and electricity to economic activity. Even the interposition forces especially the French Licorne forces are under pressure as one year prolongation means the French elections of 2006 would be caught up in the Ivorian political turmoil and politicians would exploit the exploitable put pressure on French authorities, given the huge financial burden of maintaining 4000 troops in Cote d'Ivoire.

- *Elections in Burkina Faso*: The November 2005 Presidential elections in Burkina Faso may constitute a distraction or cushioning element for the crisis in Cote d'Ivoire. Accused by the Ivorian authorities for serving as bases for the rebellion that has put the nation under siege for more than three years, elections in Burkina Faso and depending on who ever emerges winner may usher a new dawn in relations. Although it is possible that such elections may use the Ivorian factor as a political weapon, the likelihood of mounting tension is low since the Burkina authorities have themselves refused calls by some civil society and opposition groups to open the polls to the *Diaspora voters* in Cote d'Ivoire as a means to attenuating the abusive use of Burkina votes by Ivorian politicians. This debate that remains an issue in the northern neighbour's political discourse iterates the call for a sub-regional approach to resolving the Ivorian crisis.

Despite these opportunities, the challenges are still enormous. The polarization is still rife and may widen. Calls for President Gbagbo's resignation at this time may turn the tables and ignite the Patriotic Youths to hijack the process by posing their won 'conditionalities'.

Possible Scenarios

The following scenarios can be envisaged between now and the planned elections.

Best case Scenario

The appointed Prime Minister enjoys consensus from both protagonists. Tough, decisive and focused, the new Prime Minister does not succumb to manipulation and intimidation. Besides mobilizing the international community to his course, the Prime Minister succeeds in breaking the omen of prevarications and apportioning of blame and flagging of pre-conditions by undertaking a rapid but successful DDR process. The peace process is further bolstered by the major victories at the African Nations Cup and World Cup by the Elephants of Cote d'Ivoire. Politics of rancour and mistrust give way to reconciliation backed by a more assertive and resolute international community speaking with one voice. A solid foundation for free and fair elections is laid.

Realistic/middle case scenario

Disagreement and dilly dallying persist and President Gbagbo slowly but steadily consolidates himself. The bond that tied the G7 grouping under a political marriage of convenience finally weakens and the opposition is divided on fundamental issues. New alliances emerge prior to the elections and the status quo reigns as the de facto arrangements transform into de jure. President

Gbagbo mends fences with the French and benefits from a disunited opposition rocked by a bitter struggle for power and inability to file a unique candidate.

Worst case scenario

Despite international engagement and commitment, the planned DDRR fails as Force Nouvelles and its supporters insist that President Gbagbo resigns. Inability to break the impasse pushes the FPI led Government to unilaterally sack the G7 ministers, appoint a new cabinet and mobilize to forcefully re-unite the country. New rounds of hostilities break out and Cote d'Ivoire plunges into another round of violence.

Options for Response

In addition to the many recommendations discussed in the analysis of the AU Decisions above, we recommend the exploration of the following options:

- ❑ *Elephants as weapon for peace*: National team, the Elephants of Cote d'Ivoire should be used as a weapon for peace. While taking precaution that this should not mean political recuperation for the President alone, a tour of whole nation may be envisaged between now and December, insisting on national reconciliation; total and unconditional disarmament and dismantling of all militias; and reunification to bolster the squad's morale in the games. A friendly (or preparatory matches) can be organized in Bouaké.
- ❑ *Time to ignite the true Civil Society Spirit*: No peace process has succeeded in Africa without a robust but impartial civil society. Though difficult to draw such a line in highly polarized context like in Cote d'Ivoire, it perhaps an opportunity for sub-regional civil society structures to become fully engaged in the process. The IWG and present initiatives should explore these opportunities drawing on the experiences of CSOs in the Liberian and Sierra Leonean cases.
- ❑ *Evaluation of Peace Process*: In a bid to avoid errors of the past, it is proper that current interventions as defined the AU-UN decisions should make a thorough assessment of the peace process and determine who has veritably complied and who has played the gallery. Such findings must not be held secret. The people should be informed and appropriate engagement of key spoilers and loop holes addressed.
- ❑ *Enlargement of the Peace Table*: The peace table so far has been an affair for rebel leaders, politicians as if they owned Cote d'Ivoire. It should expand to include key religious leaders, members of parliament and judiciary, civil society (especially influential women groups, the media, and professional associations and trade unions).

Conclusion

All avenues must be explored and exploited. The multi dimensional approach must culminate in a veritable rapprochement between all forces and stakeholders in Cote d'Ivoire; Government of Gbagbo and French Government; President Gbagbo and President Blaise Compaoré of Burkina

Faso. The psychological worry that he who brokers the peace may collect all the economic dividends in a competing world where economic interests are always at play is one of the areas that have not been considered a factor for the stalled process. Fundamental issues that were raised in the 2001 Forum on National Reconciliation, Accra I and Lomé, Marcoussis, and expanded in Accra II and III as well as Pretoria I and II have all been courageously addressed. Significant progress has been made and these must not be sacrificed by any egoistic tendencies by which ever side of the conflict. It is time for action, sincerity and fairness. Voiceless Ivorian and Africans are anxiously watching and we must not fail them.

