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COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION KEY DOCUMENTS

# IVORY COAST

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2 NOVEMBER 2007

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## PREFACE .....

- i This Country of Origin Information (COI) Key Documents has been produced by Research, Development and Statistics (RDS), Home Office, for use by officials involved in the asylum/human rights determination process. It provides general background information about the issues most commonly raised in asylum/human rights claims made in the United Kingdom. The COI Key Documents includes information available up to 2 November 2007.
- ii The COI Key Documents is an indexed list of key reports, papers and articles produced by a wide range of recognised external information sources. It does not contain any Home Office opinion or policy.
- iii For Home Office users, the COI Key Documents provides direct electronic access to each source referred to in the document, via a link on the source numbers in the index and list of sources. For the benefit of external users, the relevant web link has also been included, together with the date that the link was accessed.
- iv As noted above, the documents identified concentrate mainly on human rights issues. By way of introduction, brief background information on Ivory Coast is also provided. Please note, this background material is not intended to provide a summary of the material contained in the key documents listed.
- v This COI Key Documents and the documents listed are publicly disclosable.
- vi Any comments regarding this COI Key Documents or suggestions for additional documents are very welcome and should be submitted to the Home Office as below.

### Country of Origin Information Service

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## Background information on Ivory Coast

**Full Country Name:** Republic of Ivory Coast (Republique de Côte d'Ivoire)

**Area:** total: 322,460 sq km, land 318,000 sq km, water 4.460 sq km

**Population:** 17,654,843 (July 2006 est.)

**Capital City: name:** Yamoussoukro: geographic coordinates: 5 19 N, 4 02 W, time difference: UTC 0 (5 hours ahead of Washington, DC during Standard Time) note: although Yamoussoukro has been the official capital since 1983, Abidjan remains the commercial and administrative centre; the US, like other countries, maintains its Embassy in Abidjan.

**People:** Akan 42.1%; Voltaiques or Gur 17.6%; Northern Mandes 16.5%; Krous 11%; Southern Mandes 10%; other 2.8% (includes 130,000 Lebanese and 14,000 French) (1998).

**Languages:** French (official), 60 native dialects with Dioula the most widely spoken.

**Religion(s):** Muslim 35-40%, indigenous 25-40%, Christian 20-30% (2001).

Note: the majority of foreigners (migratory workers) are Muslim (70%) and Christian (20%).

**Currency:** Communauté Financière Africaine franc (XOF); the issuing authority is the Central Bank of the West African States.

Major Political Parties and leaders: Citizen's Democratic Union or UDCY [Theodore MEL EG]; Democratic Party of Cote d'Ivoire-African Democratic Rally or PDCI-RDA [Henri Konan BEDIE]; Ivorian Popular Front or FPI [Laurent GBAGBO]; Ivorian Worker's Party or PIT [Francis WODIE]; Opposition Movement of the Future or MFA [Anaky KOBENAN]; Rally of the Republicans or RDR [Alassane OUATTARA]; Union for Democracy and Peace in Cote d'Ivoire or UDPCI [Mabri TOIKEUSE]; over 20 smaller parties.

**Chief of state:** President Laurent GBAGBO (since 26 October 2000)

**Head of government:** Prime Minister Guillaume SORO (since 4 April 2007)

**Cabinet:** Council of Ministers appointed by the president; note - under the current power-sharing agreement the prime minister and the president share the authority to appoint ministers.

**Elections:** president elected by popular vote for a five-year term (no term limits); election last held 26 October 2000 (after the government postponed elections in 2005 and 2006 and the UN Security Council voted to extend its mandate to October 2007, and elections have been further postponed to early 2008) [25e](4 March 2007) ; prime minister appointed by the president (current Prime Minister Banny was appointed by African Union mediators as part of the existing power-sharing agreement).

**Election results:** Laurent GBAGBO elected president; percent of vote - Laurent GBAGBO 59.4%, Robert GUEI 32.7%, Francis WODIE 5.7%, other 2.2%.

**International organization participation:** ACCT, ACP, AfDB, AU, ECOWAS, Entente, FAO, FZ, G-24, G-77, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICCT (signatory), ICRM, IDA, IDB, IFAD, IFC, IFRCS, ILO, IMF, IMO, Interpol, IOC, IOM, IPU, ITSO, ITU, ITUC, MIGA, NAM, OIC, OIF, OPCW, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNIDO, Union Latina, UNWTO, UPU, WADB (regional), WAEMU, WCL, WCO, WFTU, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO. [1]

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## GEOGRAPHY

US Department of State Report on Human Rights Practices for 2005, Ivory Coast, published on 8 March 2006 notes that: "Ivory Coast is situated in Western Africa, bordering the North Atlantic Ocean, between Ghana and Liberia." [1]

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## RECENT HISTORY

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profile, updated 14 May 2007, notes that: "Cote d'Ivoire was part of French colonial West Africa. It was a major area of agricultural development under French rule, attracting immigrant workers from throughout the French African Empire. It gained independence from France in 1960, retaining close ties with the former colonial power through a number of bilateral agreements including membership of the Franc Zone, a Defence Pact, and provision for a French military base in the country." [3]

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profile, updated 14 May 2007, also notes that: "Felix Houphouet-Boigny became the first President and ruled for 33 years until his death in 1993. His party, the PDCI, was the sole legal party until 1990 when multipartyism was introduced. During his time in office, Cote d'Ivoire was renowned as the most prosperous and most stable country in the West African region. It also hosted the largest French community in francophone Africa. His rule was shaken by economic recession in the 1980s, when prices of the main exports, cocoa and coffee, plunged." [3]

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profile, updated 14 May 2007, states: "The first multi-party elections since independence were held in 1990 which Houphouet-Boigny easily won against veteran opposition leader Laurent Gbagbo. At his death in 1993, he was succeeded by Henri Konan Bedie, the speaker of the National Assembly. The careful ethnic and regional balance which Houphouet-Boigny had nurtured, together with his welcoming of immigrant workers, was soon compromised, by the concept of 'Ivoirite' (Ivorian nationalism), which quickly acquired xenophobic connotations. This began a sequence of events which was to deprive the country of its long record of stability and prosperity." [3]

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## RECENT EVENTS AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profile, updated 14 May 2007, also states that: "Various agreements have failed to produce significant progress on the key issues of the national identification process, preparations for elections and disarmament. In October 2005 it was decided by the African Union (endorsed by the United Nations) that Laurent Gbagbo should remain as head of state for a transitional 12 month period. This was rolled over for a further 12 months in October 2006. Charles Konan Banny became Prime Minister in December 2005 and The AU also created the International Working Group which has met every month in Abidjan. Despite some progress Banny was not ultimately able to make significant steps towards elections. In March 2007 a new agreement was signed between the President and the leader of the New Forces, Guillaume Soro, under the mediation of Burkinabe President Blaise Compaore (the Ouagadougou Accords), under which Soro became Prime Minister. The formal division between the rebel held north and the government south has now been ended, but little progress has yet been made on re-integrating the rebel forces into the army, or on the national identification process." [3]

The International Crisis Group (ICG) reports in an article 'Conflict history: Cote d'Ivoire', published October 2007, that: "South African-led mediation resulted in new April 2005 peace accord. The government restated commitment to Linas-Marcoussis Accord reforms and agreed to UN supervision of October 2005 elections, with RDR leader Ouattara permitted to stand. The FN renounced agreement August 2005. Gbagbo and

National Assembly continued in office despite mandate ending. Charles Konan Banny appointed interim prime minister 4 December 2005. Sporadic protests and attacks by pro-Gbagbo-youth against UN culminated in January 2006 riots. UNSC implemented targeted sanctions against leaders on both sides (but not Gbagbo) February 2006." [27e]

The ICG article continues: "UN Security Council resolution 1721 November 2006 extended transitional government's mandate for another year, widened PM powers and set new elections deadline October 2007. Gbagbo expressed disagreement with some provisions of UNSCR 1721 and proposed instead direct dialogue with former rebellion. Dialogue began February 2007 and led to March 2007 Ouagadougou agreement and naming of FN leader Guillaume Soro as new prime minister. Seven out of 33 ministerial positions to FN, 11 to Gbagbo's faction; disarmament of armed forces and militia as well as identification process agreed on. Despite Agreement's January/February 2008 deadline, by October 2007, National Election Commission said slow voter registration may cause presidential elections delay till October 2008. Dismantling of militias started 19 May. President Gbagbo visited FN stronghold of Bouaké for first time since end of war for 30 July weapon burning ceremony as symbolic start for disarmament process. In July 2007, mandate of UNOCI and French peacekeepers extended to mid-January 2008." [27e]

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## ECONOMY

GDP: \$29.05 billion (2006 est.)

GDP real growth rate: 1.2% (2006 est.)

Industries: foodstuffs, beverages; wood products, oil refining, truck and bus assembly, textiles, fertilizer, building materials, electricity, ship construction and repair.

Exports - partners: France 18.3%, Netherlands 9.7%, US 9.1%, Nigeria 7.2%, Germany 4.2% (2006)

Exchange rates: Communauté Financière Africaine francs (XOF) per US dollar - 522.89 (2006), 527.47 (2005), 528.29 (2004), 581.2 (2003), 696.99 (2002) [1]

The CIA World Factbook, updated 18 October 2007, states that: "Cote d'Ivoire is among the world's largest producers and exporters of coffee, cocoa beans, and palm oil. Consequently, the economy is highly sensitive to weather conditions and to fluctuations in international prices for these products. Despite government attempts to diversify the economy, it is still heavily dependent on agriculture and related activities, engaging roughly 68% of the population. Growth was negative in 2000-03 because of the difficulty of meeting the conditions of international donors, continued low prices of key exports, foreign divestment and civil war. Political turmoil has continued to damage the economy since 2004, with a rising risk premium associated with doing business in the country, foreign investment shriveling, transportation costs increasing, French businesses fleeing, and criminal elements that traffic in weapons and diamonds gaining ground. The government will continue to survive financially off of the sale of cocoa, which represents 90% of foreign exchange earnings, but the government will probably lose between 10% and 20% of its cocoa harvest to northern rebels who smuggle the cocoa they control to neighbouring countries where cocoa prices are higher. The government remains hopeful that ongoing exploration of Cote d'Ivoire's offshore oil reserves will result in significant production that could boost daily crude output from roughly 33,000 barrels per day (b/d) to more than 200,000 b/d by the end of the decade." [1]

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## HUMAN RIGHTS

The USSD report for 2007, states that: "The government's human rights record remained poor. Continuing political instability and uncertainty kept tensions high throughout the country. The following human rights abuses were reported:

- restriction of citizens' right to change their government
- arbitrary and unlawful killing, including summary executions by security forces, progovernment militias, and student groups
- disappearances; torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment and punishment by security forces, progovernment militias, and a student group
- deplorable prison and detention centre conditions
- security force impunity; arbitrary arrest and detention; denial of a fair public trial; arbitrary interference with privacy, family, home, and correspondence
- police harassment and abuse of noncitizen Africans
- use of excessive force and other abuses in internal conflicts
- restrictions on freedoms of speech, press, peaceful assembly, association, and movement; corruption
- discrimination and violence against women
- female genital mutilation (FGM); child abuse and exploitation
- trafficking in persons; forced labour, including by children
- child labour, including hazardous labour

The NF's human rights record continued to be poor. ONUCI reported the killing and disappearance of civilians in NF-held territories. The NF arbitrarily arrested and detained persons and conducted arbitrary ad hoc justice. ONUCI's human rights office reported fewer child soldiers in NF ranks and the release of many during the year..”  
[2a](p1)

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## Index to key source documents

|                                         |       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
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