



U.S. Embassy Abidjan Cote d'Ivoire

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This daily press review is compiled by the Information Section of the Public Affairs Office of the American Embassy in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. For questions regarding this service, please contact: Mr. Teko Folli in the Public Affairs Press Office, TekoFX@state.gov.

September 30, 2010

The upcoming presidential election slated for October 31 was again in the limelight of today's press. Dailies also reported on US Ambassador Carter's meeting with the chairman of the Independent Election Commission and the conclusion of a joint fact-finding mission lead by the International Monetary Fund to assess national policy to reduce poverty.

1. Prime Minister Soro Guillaume chaired yesterday at his cabinet a technical meeting with the different bodies tasked with the practical preparation of the presidential poll. Reporting on the working session, **Fraternite Matin (a state-owned daily)** noted that the meeting brought together the chairman of the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI), Mr. Youssouf Bakayoko, the Special Envoy of President Blaise Compaore –the facilitator of the Ouagadougou Peace Agreement- and the management of the national identification Agencies, i.e.: CNSI and ONI. Prime Minister Soro was reported as paying tribute to the different actors with regard to the work achieved and noted that IDs and voter cards will be available soon. "It is good to know that voter cards have been finalized since last Tuesday and are ready to be used," the paper reported Mr. Soro as saying. "However, the main challenge now is their timely distribution," Prime Minister Soro added. The distribution, the Ivorian Premier said, must be done in a satisfactory way and on time to enable people to vote. The Commanding Officer of the Integrated Command Center (ICC) General Nicolas Kouadio and UNOCI official Ndolam Ngokoue also attended the meeting, the paper said.

In a related development, **L'Expression (a daily close to the opposition RDR Party)** informed readers that National ID and voter cards are due to be received tomorrow from Belgium and Germany. Their distribution will start immediately upon reception with the logistical support of the United Nations Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI), the paper added. Distribution operation will begin in Abidjan and Bouake before being progressively extended nationwide, the paper further said.

2. As part of a series of consultations with Ivorian political stakeholders, US Ambassador, Phillip Carter met yesterday with the Chairman of the Independent Electoral Commission, Mr. Bamba Youssouf. Reporting on the meeting, **Soir Info (an independent daily)** indicated that US Embassy Political and Economical Adviser, Mrs. Mary Townswick, was part of the American delegation accompanying Ambassador Carter. The ongoing electoral process was the main issue discussed, the paper said. "The chairman of the Independent Election Commission and I both agree on the way to conduct the electoral process," Ambassador Carter was reported as saying. Ambassador Carter recommitted again the US to support the peace and electoral processes underway, adding that centers such as the National Democratic Institute and the Carter Center are part of the US support of the process.

Le Patriote (a daily close to the opposition RDR Party) also reported on the visit and carried a banner headline saying: "The United States Back the Ivorian National Election Commission."

3. A fact-finding mission jointly conducted by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the African Development Bank to assess national policy to reduce poverty was concluded yesterday in Abidjan. Most dailies, including **Fraternite Matin, Nord-Sud Quotidien (a daily close to the Ivorian Prime Minister) Le Quotidien d'Abidjan (a daily close to the ruling FPI party) and L'Inter (an independent daily)** reported on the mission. According to IMF Chief of Mission Mrs. Doris Ross, economic activity has held up well in 2010, and growth appears on track to reach the program target of 3 percent for the year despite sporadic power outages, difficulties in the oil and refinery sectors, and some civil unrest during the first half of 2010. "The pending implementation of cocoa and coffee sector reforms is important for the floating completion point under the Heavily Indebted Poor Country Debt Initiative (HIPC)," Mrs. Ross was reported as saying.

4. Finally, the alleged arms smuggling scandal was again reported on. **L'Intelligent d'Abidjan (an independent daily)** updated readers on the development of the issue saying that state Prosecutor Raymond Tchimou could take up the case and initiates a legal investigation. According to the daily, the move stemmed from the sensitive trend the issue is turning to.

Still on the alleged scandal, **Soir Info** commented that the issue is becoming embarrassing. Reporting Ambassador Carter's reaction on the subject issue on the margin of a meeting with the Ivorian Premier last Tuesday, the paper noted that the case, being now a "legal issue", as qualified by Ambassador Carter, is not likely to find a political settlement; hence its complexity.

September 29, 2010

A communiqué of the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) calling on candidates for the presidential election to abide by the electoral law, the UN Security Council's decision to send additional troops to Cote d'Ivoire ahead of the upcoming polls and the US Ambassador's consultations with Ivorian political stakeholders made major news today.

1. In a statement made yesterday, the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) called on the different bidders for the presidential election to abide by the legal provisions regulating the poll. The information was reported by **Nord-Sud Quotidien (a daily close to the Ivorian Prime Minister)** which published the full communiqué. Mr. Bamba Yacouba, the spokesperson of the Electoral Commission, indicated that the statement was made with regard to recent incidents involving candidates who have already started campaigning in violation of the electoral law. According to Mr. Bamba, campaigning before the official date slated for October 15 through 29 is a violation of the electoral law. "Outside of this official timeframe, hanging posters and signs of candidates are forbidden. The same applies to the distribution of any electoral material, such as ballot papers and circulars, and the holding of rallies," Mr. Bamba said.

With more on the reminder of the Commission, **Le Nouveau Reveil (a daily close to the former ruling PDCI-RDA party)** informed readers that the statement was banned on the national television. According to the daily, the management of the national radio and television channel –state media as known as the RTI- refused to broadcast the appeal. The paper argued that the ban was a camouflage to favor President Gbagbo, whose beforehand political campaign generally receives large state media coverage.

2. In response to a recommendation by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, the UN Security Council agreed yesterday to deploy up to 500 additional uniformed personnel to the United Nations Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI) for a maximum period of six months. According to **Le Quotidien d'Abidjan (a daily close to the ruling FPI party)**, which quoted the President of the Council, Ertugrul Apakan, the decision is meant to reinforce the mission's capacity to contribute to the security arrangements before, during and after the elections. "The members of the Security Council urged the Ivorian stakeholders to meet their commitments to organize the first round of the elections on October 31 and stressed the need for the parties to ensure calm prior to, during and after the vote."

3. Just a few days after presenting his credentials, US Ambassador in Cote d'Ivoire Phillip Carter has initiated a series of consultations with Ivorian political stakeholders. **Fraternite Matin (a state-owned daily)** noted that Ambassador Carter met with Ivorian Prime Minister Soro Guillaume yesterday afternoon. Discussions, the paper said, focused on the electoral process underway. "We hope that these elections will be credible, fair, peaceful and inclusive," the paper reported Ambassador Carter as saying. Ambassador Carter also recommitted the US to support the Ivorian people in the electoral process and underscored that strengthening bilateral cooperation between the two states are in view, the paper said.

On the margin of this working visit, the daily added that Ambassador Carter addressed the alleged arms deal involving high-ranking Ivorian officials and which has led to the arrest of an Ivorian Army officer by American law enforcement agents." It is now a legal issue I cannot comment on," the US Ambassador was reported as saying.

Le Nouveau Reveil (a daily close to the former ruling PDCI-RDA party), L'Inter (an independent daily), L'Intelligent d'Abidjan (an independent daily), Nord-Sud Quotidien (a daily close to the Ivorian Prime Minister) carried similar reports.

4. Still on Ambassador Carter's political consultations, **Le Patriote (a daily close to the opposition RDR Party)** noted that the leader of the RDR party, Mr. Alassane Ouattara, had talks with the US Ambassador yesterday. "We discussed the current political and social situation and prospective cooperation," Ambassador Carter was reported as saying.

September 28, 2010

Political rallies ahead of the presidential poll made front-page stories in today's national news. The forthcoming visit of French official Claude Gueant, the World Bank-supported project to spur post-crisis development and a bill of law on child labor under study by the Ivorian Parliament were other major items reported on.

1. The social front is dominated by the electoral campaign. Most dailies reported on President Gbagbo's visit in the Zanzan region and political rallies of opposition parties. **Fraternite Matin (a state-owned daily)** carried prominent articles on the upcountry visit of the Ivorian leader, who initiated his campaign yesterday in Bouna. Addressing a rally on the occasion, President and citizen Gbagbo called on the local population to vote for him during the coming elections. "I am the option for political boldness and development," the paper reported him as saying.

In a similar move, RDR opposition leader Alassane Ouattara concluded a four-day political tour yesterday in Ferkessedougou. "I am the right person to put an end to your sufferings and well-equipped to develop the country," **Le Patriote (a daily close to the opposition RDR Party)** reported Mr. Alassane as saying in his address in Ouangolodougou.

2. With 33 days left before the poll, political speculations are also reported. **L'Intelligent d'Abidjan (an independent daily)** "uncovered" what could be regarded as a gentleman's agreement between President Gbagbo and opposition heavyweight Alassane Ouattara. According to the daily, which did not confirm the deal, President Gbagbo has already started negotiations with the leader of the RDR party ahead of a potential run-off opposing the two men. The agreement, the paper said, could include power sharing between the two rival leaders.

3. Scheduled for October 2 in Yamoussoukro, the working visit of French official Claude Gueant was again reported on. **L'Inter (an independent daily)** carried an article on the trip, arguing that the bottom line of the visit is to show that France does not back up and/or favor a particular candidate during the upcoming elections. The visit of the French Secretary is to echo this to the three main bidders –President Gbagbo and opposition leaders Henri Konan Bedie and Alassane Ouattara- the current position and call them to respect the outcome of the poll, the paper said

4. In the framework of the four-year Country Partnership Strategy (CPS) for Côte d'Ivoire –a World Bank-supported project aimed at improving governance, rebuilding institutions, strengthening the performance of agriculture, supporting private sector development and renewing infrastructure and basic services- a total of US \$750 million will be made available to Ivorian authorities. Reporting on the issue, **Le Temps (a daily close to the ruling FPI party)** noted that the announcement was made yesterday by Mrs. Joelle Businger Dehasse in the course of a meeting which brought together delegates from the Ministry of Economy and Development and World Bank executives.

5. On the initiative of the Ivorian Labor Minister, Mr. Emile Guiriellou, a bill of law to ban the worst forms of child labor in Cote d'Ivoire is due to be adopted today by the national Assembly. The information was provided by **L'Expression (a daily close to the opposition)** which underscored that the bill also includes legal provisions against perpetrators.

6. The allegations of arms smuggling involving Ivorian high-ranking officials continued to be reported on. **Le Nouveau Reveil (a daily close to the former ruling PDCI-RDA party)** published an interview by the leader of MFA -Movement of Future Forces-. In a wide-ranging address, Mr. Anaky traced the recent attempt by the Ivorian Minister of Defense to bypass a UN ban and import weapons from the USA to a well-plotted action of the ruling FPI party to confiscate power. According to Mr. Anaky, Abidjan, as well as the western part of the country, are full of arms caches that have been hidden and are likely to be handed over to pro-FPI militias if things do not happen as desired by the ruling party.

September 27, 2010

News reported today and over the weekend was highlighted by the ongoing electoral process. High-level meetings, political rallies and speculations ahead of the poll were major news items.

1. As announced last Friday, the final voter list was officially certified by the UN Special Envoy in Cote d'Ivoire, Mr. Y. J. Choi. Reporting on the ceremony which took place at the UN mission headquarters in Abidjan, **Le Jour Plus (a daily close to the opposition)** noted that the move bodes well for the actual holding of the poll as planned and commits the different political actors to act to this end. "In keeping with the certification mandate vested upon me by the Security Council, I have the honor to explicitly certify the final list of 5,725,720 registered voters for the upcoming elections," the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Côte d'Ivoire, Y. J. Choi, declared on the occasion. Mr. Choi explained the major steps the process went through over the past five years and underscored that the two main criteria for the certification were peace and an inclusive process. The UN official also highlighted the remaining "technical and logistical challenges" to meet before the poll, the paper said. "These challenges will be addressed together with the Ivorian people and international sponsors," he added and promised to ensure the process is fair and credible.

Still on the issue, **Fraternite Matin (a state-owned daily)** carried in its weekend edition a similar report, adding that efforts will be made to provide shelter for the 3.600 open-air voting posts. "I am convinced the remaining technical challenges will be overcome together for the Ivorian People who have been waiting for these elections and deserve them," Mr. Choi reportedly said.

2. Ahead of the prospective poll and the official campaign timeframe set by the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI), most bidders for the presidency –including President Gbagbo- have already started upcountry political tours. Thus, **Notre Voie (a daily close to the ruling FPI party)** noted that, since yesterday, the Ivorian leader is in the northeast region of Zanzan in the framework of what is reported as the starting point of his campaign. According to the daily, thousands of people gathered to welcome the "President-candidate" as he stepped into the city yesterday afternoon.

Similarly, **Le Patriote (a daily close to the opposition RDR Party)** informed readers that opposition leader Alassane Ouattara has initiated since last week a political tour in the northern part of the country known as the "Region des Savanes". The leader of the RDR party has been addressing political rallies in his hometown of Kong and Ferkessedougou, the paper said.

3. The new Ambassador of the United States in Cote d'Ivoire, Ambassador Philipp Carter III, presented his credentials to President Gbagbo last Friday. **L'Intelligent d'Abidjan (an independent daily)** carried a banner headline on the subject matter, underlining that two "hot potatoes" are already awaiting the US Ambassador. In a prominent report, the daily indicated that that the case of Ivorian former Prime Minister and stakeholder of

the ruling FPI Party, Mr. Affi N'Guessan, recently turned back as he was boarding a plane to the USA, and the allegations of arms smuggling attempted in the United States by the Ivorian Minister of Defense Mr. Amani Michel despite a UN ban are the sensitive files Ambassador Carter is faced with as he takes up post.

Le Jour Plus (a daily close to the opposition) and **Notre Voie (a daily close to the ruling FPI party)** also reported on the presentation of credentials to the Ivorian leader.

4. With more on the US Ambassador, **Le Jour Plus (a daily close to the opposition)** noted that the UN Special Envoy in Cote d'Ivoire, Mr. Y. J Choi and Ambassador Carter met over the weekend at the mission headquarters. Discussions, the paper said focused on the ongoing electoral and peace processes. "The United States support the UN and the international community in their efforts to ensure the electoral process is peaceful, fair and credible," Ambassador Carter said.

September 24, 2010

The electoral process was again in the limelight of today's press. The meeting between the chairman of the Independent Electoral Commission and candidates for the presidency; concerns on practical arrangements ahead of the poll, as well as updates on the allegation of arms smuggling involving the Ivorian Minister of Defense made news.

1. The Chairman of the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI), Mr. Youssouf Bakayoko, chaired a meeting yesterday with the fourteen candidates for the presidency. Reporting on the political consultation, ***L'Expression (a daily close to the opposition)*** noted that Mr. Bakayoko recommitted the Commission to work to meet the challenge of October 31 as the date for the actual holding of the presidential election and called on the candidates to help safeguard a peaceful environment throughout the process. In a wide-ranging interaction, issues such as equal access to state media, security and transparency during the poll were addressed by the participants. A code of good conduct highlighting what is expected from the different bidders to ensure social cohesion and peace are not jeopardized during this critical time was presented to the participants.

2. Still on the electoral process, ***Fraternite Matin (a state-owned daily)*** carried a banner headline announcing the certification of the voter list by the UN Special Envoy in Cote d'Ivoire. According to the daily, ahead of this important step in the electoral process, Mr. Choi has initiated a series of consultations with the international community and social and political actors. "The list is balanced and reliable," the paper reported the UN Envoy as saying. The official certification ceremony is due to take place today at the headquarters of the UN mission in Abidjan, the paper added.

3. With more on the prospective election, ***Le Quotidien d'Abidjan (a daily close to the ruling FPI party)*** informed readers that some 4000 individuals are unlikely to participate in the poll. According to the daily, these people, belonging to the national Muslim community, are likely to miss the vote as a result of a religious pilgrimage they are due to attend in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. The case of these Ivorian nationals was brought up by the Chairman of the Islamic Council, Imam Boikary Fofana, in the course of a meeting with the Chairman of the CEI, Mr. Bakayoko. The issue, the chairman of the Electoral Commission said, will be addressed in a timely manner. "No one should be excluded from the process," Imam Boikary was reported as saying.

4. On bilateral relations, ***Fraternite Matin (a state-owned daily)*** informed readers that the visit French official Claude Gueant is announced in Cote d'Ivoire. The French official is due to meet with the Ivorian leader on behalf of President Sarkozy, the paper said, adding that the meeting is scheduled for October 2 in Yamoussoukro. The visit could warm up the relationship between the two countries after a long chill, the paper further said.

5. Finally, the arms smuggling scandal involving the Ivorian Minister of Defense Mr. Amani N'Guessan continued to be reported. ***Le Nouveau Reveil (a daily close to the***

former ruling PDCI-RDA party) reported on an interview of the Ivorian Minister on the margin of a meeting Wednesday with the UN Special Envoy in Cote d'Ivoire Mr. Y. J Choi. According to Mr. Amani, who was speaking on the UN radio channel ONUCI-FM, the UN could support Ivorian authorities in acquiring the security equipments purchased in the United States and help with the release of Colonel Yao N'Guessan, arrested in connection with the case by American authorities. These non-lethal arms are needed to ensure security during the poll, Mr. Amani argued. The same interview was reported by **Le Mandat (a daily close to the former ruling PDCI-RDA party)**.

September 23, 2010

The general political atmosphere amid preparations for the presidential elections slated for the end of October, the payment of the first installment of overdue money to demobilized elements from the New Forces military and security issues ahead of the poll were major items developed in today's national press. A recent fact-finding mission of the IMF to assess the government's economical policy, as well as a report on US efforts to stop child labor, were other items developed.

1. Two days after Ivorian political stakeholders met in Ouagadougou to assess the peace and electoral processes underway, candidates vying for the presidency are engaged in what is referred to as the "pre-campaign" while arrangements are being made by the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) to meet the challenge of the October 31 election day. According to ***Soir Info (an independent daily)***, identity and voter cards will be delivered soon to the 5.725.720 Ivorian nationals cleared to participate in the poll. The announcement was made yesterday by the vice-president of the Commission, Mr. Coulibaly Gnemene, in the course of an interview on the UN radio channel, ONUCI-FM. Mr. Gnemene underscored that voters will be allowed to take part in the process as long as their names appeared on the final voter list, adding that voters should in no way be turned back in case they are missing their national IDs. Mr. Gnemene argued that potential delays in the distribution of national IDs are to be feared and the decision is taken accordingly to ensure that all voters, whether they have their IDs or not, take part in the poll, the paper added.

2. Still on the electoral process, ***Le Nouveau Reveil (a daily close to the former ruling PDCI-RDA party)*** informed readers that the fourteen (14) bidders for the presidency are due to sign today a code of good conduct. According to the daily, the bottom line of this action initiated by the Independent Electoral Commission is to commit the candidates to a peaceful electoral campaign ahead of the poll and ensure they all abide by the legal electoral provisions throughout the process.

3. The payment of the first installment of overdue salaries to former army staff from the New Forces military started yesterday in Korhogo. The information was released by ***the state-owned daily Fraternite Matin***, which noted that the event is a cornerstone in the electoral process, as it addressed a crucial issue. Elements volunteering to join the regular Army and demobilized soldiers will be respectively receiving as of now a monthly allowance of CFA francs 50.000 and 25.000, the paper said. The 318 former soldiers from Korhogo each received, CFA Francs 175000 as the first installment of CFA francs 500.000. The operation, the paper added, will be extended in the other zones under the command of the New Forces. "Today we are launching the payment but measures will also be taken to ensure barracks are well equipped," the representative of the Minister of Economy, Mr. Aka Pierre, was reported as saying. Mr. Bakayoko from the New Forces leadership paid tribute to the demobilized and former soldiers, the paper added.

4. With 38 days left before the poll, security concerns are still being reported. ***Le Quotidien (a daily close to the ruling FPI party)*** carried a sarcastic report on the

Integrated Command Center - joint forces composed of both army staff from the regular and the New Forces military – tasked to ensure nationwide security during the electoral period. According to the daily, the Center is “an empty shell.” The paper argued that the Center is not fully operational and lacks basic anti-riot and crowd control equipments, making it hardly possible to ensure security during the poll.

5. On good governance, the recent fact-finding mission of the IMF continued to be reported on. ***L’intelligent d’Abidjan (an independent daily)*** noted that IMF Chief of Mission Mrs. Doris Ross called Ivorian authorities to continue efforts initiated to ensure transparency in the national economy. The national treasury, the customs services and public expenses are to be given due consideration, the paper said.

6. Finally, ***Soir Info (an independent daily)*** informed readers that the fight to stop the worst forms of child labor remains a major challenge for the United States. Thus, a USD 10 million grant will be made available to fight the practice in Cote d’Ivoire and Ghana - the two world leaders in cocoa production - where the phenomenon is much reported. According to the daily, the announcement was made in the course of a meeting held on September 13 in New York and attended by the Ivorian Labor Minister, Emile Guiriellou. The aim of the policy is to avoid children being forced to work in fields and grant them access to formal education opportunity, the paper said.

September 22, 2010

Pro and anti-government newspapers today comment on Tuesday's meeting in Ouagadougou of the CPC, the committee overseeing the implementation of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement. The dailies also report on the latest developments regarding the preparations for the October 31 presidential elections. A report on road harassment in the West African region and the US-backed project aimed at fighting HIV/AIDS in Cote d'Ivoire are the other major issues in the press.

1. A banner headline in **the state-owned daily *Fraternite Matin*** says that the Ivorian political stakeholders meeting yesterday in Ouagadougou to evaluate the peace process underway in Cote d'Ivoire outlined the last major tasks to be completed before the presidential elections slated for October 31. The meeting brought together members of the CPC: President Laurent Gbagbo, Prime Minister Guillaume Soro, former President Henri Konan Bedie, opposition leader Alassane Ouattara and Burkinabe President Blaise Compaore – facilitator in the Ivorian peace process. A statement issued at the end of the meeting says that the members of the CPC have agreed on "the necessity for the national ID and voter cards to be distributed at the same time and tasked the Prime Minister to take the necessary measures for the success of the operation." In order to guarantee the successful organization of the presidential elections, "members of the CPC have urged the political parties and candidates to respect the Code of Good Conduct that was signed on April 28, 2008," said the statement. According to the statement, "the CPC has particularly underscored the necessity for the Independent Electoral Commission to ensure that all the candidates have equal access to the state media during the electoral campaign." On issues relating to the reunification of the country, "the CPC has expressed satisfaction on the successful encampment of some 5,000 elements of the New Forces Armed Forces Volunteers selected to join the new army, and also welcomed major progress made in the deployment of government customs services in the central, northern and western regions of the country."

2. "Get ready to go to the polls," ***L'inter (an independent daily)*** quotes President Laurent Gbagbo as saying yesterday in Abidjan upon his return from Ouagadougou. The Ivorian leader also reportedly assured the public that "there are no political obstacles" on the way to the polls. In a separate report, the paper however quotes President Compaore as warning that "the reasons for satisfaction should not overshadow the challenges – in terms of organization and security – to overcome before the presidential elections." The Ivorian opposition leader Alassane Ouattara, whose reaction is published in ***Le Patriote (a daily close to the opposition RDR party)***, expressed optimism: "I think this time is the best. The president has assured us on the funding; the electoral commission has also given all the assurance about the conduct of the vote. I'm going to these elections with optimism and I am confident that the elections will be peaceful." Speaking after the meeting, former Ivorian President Henri Konan Bedie said: "I'm satisfied because we've confirmed October 31 as the date of the first round.... To me there is nothing that could call for the delay of the elections," reports ***Fraternite Matin***.

3. With more on the distribution of the national ID and voter cards, **Le Patriote** quotes Prime Minister Guillaume Soro, who confirmed that "Ivorians can get the national ID and voter cards by the first week of October," adding that "we'll get logistics support from the UNOCI for the distribution of the cards." In a related development, a prominent story in **L'inter** says that 67 tons of ID cards, which were printed in Germany, will be conveyed to Abidjan in early October.

4. Meanwhile, a report in **Soir Info (an independent daily)** says that a militia group based in the central region of Daloa has threatened to disrupt the elections. According to the paper, the group called the Committee of Young Patriots for Security (COJEPAS) has planned to stage a demonstration today in the city of Daloa to protest against what it called: "the lack of respect suffered by the self-defense groups in the implementation of the disarmament program."

5. In another development, an article in **L'inter** says that a report on road harassment in the West African region slams Cote d'Ivoire. According to the paper, the report, which was commissioned by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), was published yesterday in Abidjan and presented Cote d'Ivoire as a country where racketeering and road harassment have become widespread.

6. A report in **Notre Voie (a daily close to the ruling FPI party)** says that the government of Cote d'Ivoire has inaugurated an Information Resource Center on HIV/AIDS with the USG's support. The center, the report says, was opened through the financial support of PEPFAR. It also quotes the Minister in charge HIV/AIDS, Christine Nebout Adjobi, as saying that "the opening of the center marks notable progress in efforts being deployed at the national level against HIV/AIDS." Still on issues relating to HIV/AIDS, **Le Mandat (a daily close to the opposition PDCI-RDA party)** carries an investigative report denouncing what it sees as "nepotism" in the funding of projects aimed at fighting HIV/AIDS in Cote d'Ivoire.

September 21, 2010

Today's meeting in Ouagadougou of the CPC, the committee overseeing the implementation of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement, makes prominent headlines in today's Ivorian press. The preparation and the mood in this country ahead of the October 31 presidential elections and the question of security during the electoral process are the other major issues in the press. The dailies also talk about US-backed efforts to eradicate the worst forms of child labor in Cote d'Ivoire and a regional American Corner workshop underway in Abidjan.

1. Under a prominent headline announcing that key Ivorian political stakeholders are scheduled today in Ouagadougou for "a final CPC meeting", ***the state-owned daily Fraternite Matin*** suggests that President Laurent Gbagbo, Prime Minister Guillaume Soro, former President Henri Konan Bedie, opposition leader Alassane Ouattara and Burkinabe President Blaise Compaore – facilitator in the Ivorian peace process -- will try to evaluate the progress ahead of the October 31 presidential elections. The paper also expresses optimism and recalls President Gbagbo's earlier statement saying: "We're going to Ouagadougou to thank President Compaore for assisting us and spending his time to accompany us to resolve our crisis. That is all. We're not going there to resolve any problem. (...)Now that we've completed the final voter list, we've finished everything."

2. "Why are Gbagbo, Bedie and Ouattara in Ouagadougou?" asks ***Le Nouveau Courrier (a daily close to the ruling FPI party)***, which hints that the three leaders are meeting today with the mediator to give him "assurance" about their full commitment in resolving the Ivorian crisis and are ready to create an atmosphere conducive for peace in the run-up to the presidential elections.

3. As the three political leaders are expected to meet the facilitator today, a prominent report in ***Nord-Sud Quotidien (a daily close to the cabinet of the Ivorian Prime Minister)*** suggests that the Burkinabe leader, despite the notable progress in the electoral process, is concerned about the political atmosphere in Cote d'Ivoire. According to the paper, the events unfolding in neighboring Guinea (Conakry) might have prompted the facilitator to be "careful" about what could happen in Cote d'Ivoire before, during and after the presidential elections. Citing insiders, the paper discloses that President Compaore, during today's meeting, will insist on the importance of a peaceful atmosphere during the elections in Cote d'Ivoire. The paper also reports that the UN Special Envoy, Y. J. Choi, who is currently in Ouagadougou, held talks with President Compaore ahead of the CPC meeting. Choi, who was speaking after the talks about the Ivorian electoral process, reportedly said: "We've the resources and the logistics to be used for things to move according to plan."

4. In another story, ***Nord-Sud Quotidien*** gives more details about the electoral calendar, announcing that in case no candidate in the coming presidential election secures an outright victory, a second round could take place on November 27. This, the paper says, was announced yesterday by the Vice-president of the Independent Electoral

Commission (CEI), Mamadou Gnenema, who however noted that this will depend on the date of the announcement of the final results of the first round.

5. On the voting itself, a banner headline in ***Fraternite Matin*** quotes the Chairman of the CEI, Youssouf Bakayoko, who disclosed that “the electoral body will need more than 60,000 polling agents” for the organization of the October 31 presidential elections. The paper reproduces the full interview that the electoral commissioner recently granted to RTI – the state broadcaster. He reportedly said: “We are concerned about organizing a transparent election in a peaceful atmosphere,” and he called on the political leaders to respect the code of good conduct, the reports says.

6. Speaking about the significance of the forthcoming presidential elections, President Gbagbo, who is quoted by ***Fraternite Matin***, said: “This is not a competition between 14 candidates, but rather a competition between two schools of thought: Those who champion the cause of Cote d’Ivoire’s dignity against those who want Cote d’Ivoire to remain under foreign powers.”

7. On US-Cote d’Ivoire bilateral relations, a report in ***Notre Voie (a daily close to the ruling FPI party)*** says the USG and American chocolate companies are committed to supporting Cote d’Ivoire and Ghana to fight against child labor on the cocoa farms. According to the paper, the two West African countries have obtained 10-million USD in financial support that will be used to eradicate the child labor phenomenon. The report also says that the announcement was made by a top USG official on September 13 in Washington during a meeting with Ivorian and Ghanaian officials. “The USG evaluates efforts being deployed by Cote d’Ivoire to eradicate the worst forms of child labor,” writes ***Le Quotidien (another daily close to the ruling FPI party)***.

8. Finally, ***Le Nouveau Courrier*** carries a pre-event article announcing a conference that will bring together heads of American Corners from about 20 countries tomorrow in Abidjan. The conference is being organized in connection with a regional workshop, which is currently underway in Abidjan, and organized by the US Embassy.

September 20, 2010

The question of security during the coming presidential elections in Cote d'Ivoire and the latest developments in the peace process underway in the West African country are the major issues in Monday's and the weekend's Ivorian press.

1. A prominent story in the weekend edition of ***the state-owned daily Fraternite Matin*** said Ivorian military officers (government and New Forces) and their UN and French counterparts have drawn up a blueprint aimed at securing the up-coming presidential elections in Cote d'Ivoire. The plan, the paper said, was announced Friday during a meeting in Yamoussoukro. "The question of security is an important challenge for the forces present here.... The success of the elections depends mostly on the efficiency of security measures to be put in place," the paper quotes UN Forces Commander Gal Abdul Hafiz as saying after the meeting.

2. A report on the same meeting in the weekend's issue of ***Le Nouveau Courrier (a daily close to the ruling FPI party)*** announced that a mock military exercise will be conducted in connection with preparations aimed at securing the presidential elections. The paper, which attributed this information to the UN military commander in Cote d'Ivoire, said that the exercise, which is scheduled for October 3 and October 10, will involve elements to be drawn from the Ivorian government forces, the New Forces Armed Forces (FAFN), UN troops and La Licorne – the French troops based in Cote d'Ivoire. The mock exercise, the paper further quoted Gal Hafiz as saying, is also designed to test "the efficiency" of elements of the Center of Integrated Command (CCI) – a joint government forces and FAFN security unit – and that of the UN forces tasked to ensure that security prevails during the electoral process.

3. While efforts are underway to secure the coming presidential elections, a front-page report in ***L'inter (an independent daily)*** said the top military officers meeting Friday in Yamoussoukro noted that "the disarmament and encampment of the former New Forces combatants is not yet complete."

4. With more on the security issues ahead of the October 31 presidential elections, a banner headline in the weekend edition of ***Nord-Sud Quotidien (a daily close to the cabinet of the Prime Minister)*** said that after Divo [*a city that was swept by a wave of political violence in February this year*], the government has stepped up security in seven other cities across the country. According to the paper, the deployment of elements of CRS – a state security unit -- was announced a few days ago by Bertin Kadet, President Gbagbo's advisor on security issues. The paper cited Gagnoa [center], Abengourou [west], Agboville [south], Bouna [northwest], Duekoue [west] and San-Pedro [southwest] as the cities where the CRS units will be deployed ahead of the presidential elections.

5. In another development, prominent stories in today's and the weekend's issues of ***Fraternite Matin*** said that the Ivorian authorities have undertaken an important reshuffle of government prefects in the entire country. The reports said that, on

September 16, President Gbagbo signed nine decrees nominating new prefects, deputy prefects and other government functionaries. The reports further said all the military officers, who were holding the position of prefects and deputy prefects in most of the regions, have been replaced as a result of the reshuffle.

6. On the political atmosphere in Cote d'Ivoire ahead of the much-awaited presidential elections, **Le Patriote (a daily close to the opposition RDR party)**, in today's edition, allegedly reports that a policeman killed a young man over the weekend in Abidjan during a political rally organized by Ivorian opposition leader Alassane Ouattara. Reporting on the same incident, **Fraternite Matin** calls the event that led to the killing of the young man "a police blunder." **Fraternite Matin** also carries a report quoting an Ivorian Catholic cleric who called on the country's political leaders to make sure that the coming elections should not slide into "chaos."

7. A report in **Le Nouveau Reveil** suggests that, barring the unexpected, the key Ivorian political leaders will be meeting on September 21 in Ouagadougou with the facilitator in the Ivorian peace process, Burkinabe President Blaise Compaore. The paper hints that the meeting of the CPC – the committee overseeing the implementation of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement – will try to find a consensus on what it describes as "pending issues" to be resolved before the official launch of the presidential campaign. Another report in this paper says the Head of the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI), Youssouf Bakayoko, who was speaking yesterday on RTI, the national TV, gave details on the conduct of the October 21 presidential elections. According to the paper, Bakayoko again assured the public that the voting will take place according to the schedule and that the campaign will begin a few days ahead of elections.

8. Finally, on the access of the political parties to the state-run Broadcast Corporation -- RTI, a report in the weekend edition of **Fraternite Matin** said the CNCA – the Government-owned media regulatory body – has announced the calendar of radio and TV debates ahead of the October Presidential elections. The reports also explains that the debates are being supervised by the National Commission for Debates and Special programs, a body put in place by the CNCA in connection with the ongoing electoral process.

September 17, 2010

Friday's news continued to be highlighted by reports on the peace and electoral processes underway. The statement made yesterday by the Independent Elections Commission announcing the official timeframe set for campaigning ahead of the presidential run-up and the publishing of the number of authorized voting stations nationwide made major news items. The reaction of opposition parties on measures taken by the CNCA –the National media watchdog- ahead of the presidential poll; the general political mood and speculations were reported on as well. A conference on the role of the media during the sensitive electoral period recently hosted by the US Embassy in Abidjan was reported on too.

1. In a statement made yesterday, the Independent Election Commission –the body tasked with the preparation of the much-delayed presidential poll-, announced that the beginning of the official electoral campaign for the presidential elections is slated for October 14. Providing further details, **the state-owned daily *Fraternite Matin*** noted that a total of 10,179 polling sites, including 20,073 voting stations, have been identified and authorized nationwide by the Commission. According to the spokesperson of the Commission, Mr. Bamba Yacouba, polling stations are due to open at 7:00 o'clock in the morning of October 31 and close at 5:00 P.M. Electoral equipment, including ballots and ink, is being tested to ensure the poll is fair and credible, Mr. Yacouba added.

2. In a related development, ***Le Jour (a daily close to the opposition)*** reported that, despite measures taken by the Independent Elections Commission (CEI), potential fraud attempts are to be feared. According to the daily, ballots could be duplicated and/or falsified in the course of the poll. Intimidation and coercion could also be used as deceptive ways to alter results, the paper added before calling on the CEI to remain wary.

3. The coalition of opposition parties, dubbed RHDP, denounced the recent measures taken by the CNCA –the national media watchdog - to monitor political debates ahead of the electoral campaign. According to ***Soir Info (an independent daily)***, political parties will not be taking part in debates broadcast by the state media. The decision, the paper said, came after a lack of consensus. The RHDP through its Deputy-Secretary, Mr. Phillipe Legre, criticized the decision as a "way of discriminating against the opposition, the paper added.

4. With 44 days left before the holding of the presidential poll, speculations on the potential outcomes are reported. ***Fraternite Matin*** carried a banner headline questioning whether it is fair or illegal that President Gbagbo acts as a candidate while running state affairs. According the daily, which cited Professor Ouraga Obou, a Jurist and Constitutionalist, the idea of the "100% candidate and 100% president" advocated by President Gbagbo is authorized by Article 34 of the national Constitution, which states that the incumbent President remains in office until the formal handover ceremony with the new elected president occurs.

5. The US Embassy in Abidjan hosted last Wednesday a conference entitled “media and elections.” In a prominent report, ***Le Quotidien (a daily close to the ruling FPI party)*** noted that the two speakers –Mr. Kebe Yacouba, former Manager of the national television and radio channel, RTI, and Mr. René Bourgoïn from the CNCA, called on media professionals to report responsibly during the highly sensitive period of elections. Journalists, Mr. Kebe said, are expected to be impartial and avoid spreading information likely to endanger social cohesion and bring about troubles. Addressing the subtitle “Voters Rights and Press Freedom”, Mr. Bourgoïn highlighted that “information is corrupted when it is subject to a monopoly”. The conference was followed by a discussion with the wide-ranging participants to raise awareness on the role of media as a means to promote democracy and peace as stated by Public Affairs Officer Sita Liane Chakrawarti in her closing remarks, the paper said.

September 16, 2010

Today's Ivorian press review focuses on the preparation for the October 31 presidential elections, the tone of the message in the pre-campaign period, as well as the general political atmosphere in the country in the run-up to the polls. The Ivorian peace process and media related issues, new developments following the arrest of an Ivorian in the US for arms smuggling, government efforts to achieve economic stability and progress toward completing the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC) debt relief process and the USG's pledge to help end child labor in two African countries – including Cote d'Ivoire – where much of the world's cocoa is grown, are the major news items.

1. A prominent story in ***the state-owned daily Fraternite Matin*** says the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) and the United Nations Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI) have established a timetable for the delivery of electoral documents in 11,000 polling stations ahead of the October 31 presidential elections. According to the paper, the two bodies are also working on a three-phase plan for the distribution of voting and national ID cards as well as the dispatch of the final electoral list to some 415 local electoral commissions. The paper carries another report announcing that the Ivorian government has provided so far FCFA 10 billion (about \$ 19.8 million USD) to finance the electoral process. "Today, an amount of FCFA 10 billion, which represent the second installment of the government's financial support, has been mobilized and is available," Charles Koffi Diby, the Minister of Economy and Finance was quoted as saying yesterday in Abidjan.

2. Another report in ***Fraternite Matin*** says that the Ivorian peace process, especially the preparation of the October 31 presidential elections, was high on the agenda yesterday during a meeting between Prime Minister Guillaume Soro and the diplomatic corps in Abidjan. According to the paper, the premier told the foreign diplomats that the government is working hard to respect its financial commitment regarding the disarmament program. "Financial means have, partially, been found, and we can start paying this week the volunteers who will be joining the new army as well as those who have been demobilized," Soro reportedly said. The paper further quotes the Prime Minister as saying that each former fighter who has been demobilized will be receiving FCFA 500,000 (about \$988 USD), adding that he did not mention whether the former militiamen, who have been disbanded, will also be paid.

3. "All the candidates will have access to the TV," says a prominent headline in ***Nord-Sud Quotidien (a daily close to the cabinet of the Prime Minister)***. According to the paper, the question of giving equal access to the different presidential candidates on the state media was also addressed yesterday during the meeting between the Prime Minister and the foreign diplomats. "We've noted that the question regarding the public media is part of the criteria for the certification of the elections by the United Nations," the paper quotes the Prime Minister, who also assured the group that "beginning next week, we'll start working with the Minister of Communication and the media regulatory bodies to agree on what should be the role of the national TV in the coming elections."

4. On the general political atmosphere in the country in the run-up to the presidential elections, a banner headline in ***Notre Voie (a daily close to the ruling FPI party)*** suggests that the Ivorian opposition alliance is “preparing the mood to protest against the victory of President Gbagbo.” The paper also says that for some time now newspapers close to the opposition RHDP alliance, such as *Le Patriote (a daily close to the opposition RDR party)*, have been engaged in what it sees as “propaganda designed to bring people into believing that President Gbagbo cannot win the October 31 presidential elections and that the ruling FPI party is planning to rig the polls.”

5. On a similar tone, ***Le Nouveau Reveil (a daily close to the opposition PDCI-RDA party)*** carries a prominent story reading: “While Ivorians are campaigning for the October 31 presidential elections, the FPI regime is preparing for a bloody war.” The paper, which tries to weave in the current political atmosphere in this country and recent reports on the arrest of an Ivorian in the US for arms smuggling, allegedly claims that “Gbagbo’s party is acquiring ammunitions that would allow it to transform Cote d’Ivoire into immense mayhem, ocean of blood.” “What do they have in mind?” questions the paper, which notes on the part the regime in Abidjan a kind of “stubbornness to violate the arms embargo that the UN has imposed on Cote d’Ivoire to spare the country the specter of war.”

6. With a picture of Michel Amani N’Guessan, the Minister of Defense, on its front page, ***Le Nouveau Reveil*** carries another banner headline asking the minister to explain the circumstances leading to the arrest for arms smuggling in the US of an Ivorian who the paper presented as “his military aide”. Referring to a document from the US immigration service, the paper calls the man as Yao N’Guessan, who, it says, was being hunted down by the US intelligence following a tip off that Ivorians were trying to smuggle ammunitions in violation of a UN arms embargo imposed on Cote d’Ivoire since December 2004.

7. On economic issues, ***L’inter (an independent daily)*** reports on an interim evaluation of an International Monetary Fund-supported economic reform program aimed at helping Cote d’Ivoire achieve economic stability and make progress under the Enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC). “Efforts and sacrifices made by the government are making it possible to get closer to the attainment of the debt relief under the HIPC,” the paper quoted the Minister of Economy and Finance as saying yesterday in Abidjan during a meeting that was also attended by officials from the International Monetary Fund and the African Development Bank.

8. Finally, a report in ***L’Expression (a daily close to the opposition)*** says that the USG pledged \$10 million USD on Monday to help end child labor in two African countries – including Cote d’Ivoire – where much of the world’s cocoa is grown. The report says that the initiative is aimed at eliminating the worst forms of child labor in Ghana and Cote d’Ivoire.

September 15, 2010

The UN envoy's pledge to offer financial and technical support ahead of the October 31 presidential elections in Cote d'Ivoire is the subject of front-page stories in many dailies today. The dailies also report on a meeting Tuesday between Ivorian Prime Minister Guillaume Soro and candidates in the up-coming elections. The general political atmosphere in the country in the run-up to the much-awaited elections, the political stalemate in neighboring Guinea (Conakry), reports on community violence in south-western Cote d'Ivoire, Ivorian-French bilateral relations, and the decision by workers of the customs services to embark on a strike are the other major news items. A front-page story in the weekly Moslem newspaper Islam Info says that President Obama opposes extremism.

1. A prominent story in ***the state-owned daily Fraternite Matin*** says the United Nations Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI) has pledged to help the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) complete eight major tasks in order to have the presidential elections take place on October 31. "We'll accompany and support the Independent Electoral Commission. We won't replace the CEI," the paper quotes UN Envoy, Y. J. Choi, who was speaking yesterday after talks with Youssouf Bakayoko, the Chairman of the electoral body in Abidjan. The report also says that, with only six weeks to go the polls, the UN mission in Cote d'Ivoire is committed to support the electoral watchdog to ensure holding free and transparent elections. According to the paper, the two bodies are committed to work together in order to complete eight major tasks, including: The distribution of the voter cards and ID cards; the establishment of a full electoral map; recruitment and training of some 66,000 polling agents, electoral observation, transport and delivery of electoral documents, establishment of a center to collect electoral results and security during the polls.

2. Another major report in ***Fraternite Matin*** says Ivorian Prime Minister Guillaume Soro on Tuesday called for "a violence-free campaign" in the run-up to the crucial presidential elections in Cote d'Ivoire. Soro, the paper says, met with some candidates in the next presidential elections to reassure them that the polls will take place on October 31 according to schedule. "I can assure you that the government is fully committed to respect the date of October 31," the premier is quoted as saying. He also hoped that the electoral commission will resolve some pending issues, especially the printing and distribution of the national ID and voting cards.

3. With more on the government's commitment to holding a peaceful election, a report in ***Notre Voie (a daily close to the ruling FPI party)*** says the Prime Minister, who was meeting with the country's traditional chiefs on Monday, urged them to help keep a peaceful atmosphere during the electoral process. "I've called you today to seek your support in informing the population to vote in a brotherly and peaceful atmosphere." In a related development, a report in ***L'inter (an independent daily)*** announces that the Prime Minister is due to meet today with the diplomatic corps over the electoral process.

4. The question relating to the certification of the results of the coming elections is also the subject of a front-page story in ***Nord-Sud Quotidien (a daily close to the cabinet of the Prime Minister)***. Under a headline that says "Who will certify the results?" the paper suggests that the issue over the certification of the Ivorian elections could become a bone of contention between UNOCI and the Constitutional Court. The report further explains that the UN mission in Cote d'Ivoire has the international backup to see to the certification of the results, while the Constitutional Council is, by the law of the land, the institution vested with the power to have the final say on electoral results in Cote d'Ivoire. To add more to the controversy, the paper recalls a statement made earlier by the Chairman of the Constitutional Council, Paul Yao-N'Dre, who reportedly said: "The UN is not the judge who gives the final decision. That's the job of the Constitutional Court..."

5. Meanwhile, a front-page report in ***Le Patriote (a daily close to the opposition RDR party)*** says French Ambassador to Cote d'Ivoire Jean-Marc Simon has expressed "optimism" about the peace process underway in Cote d'Ivoire. Speaking yesterday after talks with the Ivorian opposition leader, Alassane Ouattara, the French diplomat reportedly said: "I am sure that we are on good track, we are close to the end of the tunnel..."

6. Ivorian-French relations also make a prominent headline in ***Fraternite Matin***, which announces "a rapprochement" between President Laurent Gbagbo and his French counterpart, Nicholas Sarkozy. According to the paper, a top French official is expected in Abidjan "to cement Ivorian-French relations." Quoting diplomatic sources, the paper hints that, barring the unexpected, Claude Gueant, an aide to the French president, will arrive in Abidjan before the October 31 presidential elections as part of an official visit, prompting the paper to say that, after years of misunderstanding, France and Cote d'Ivoire seem ready to turn the page. The report also quotes a French official as saying recently that France will send an official to Cote d'Ivoire after the publication of the final voter list.

7. As Ivorians are preparing to go the polls on October 31, an article in ***L'Inter*** suggests that there is a need to learn lessons from what it calls "the Guinean scenario." The paper says that, with only five days to go to the polls in this neighboring country, the whole electoral process hangs in the balance, with no guarantee as to whether the second round of the presidential elections, set for September 19, would take place or not. Back to the situation in Cote d'Ivoire, the paper comments that the October 31 presidential elections in this country and the second round of the polls in Guinea are equally important, as they are set to restore peace to both West African countries. The paper calls for swift measures to be taken in order to avoid the Guinean scenario from happening in Cote d'Ivoire.

8. Meanwhile, a prominent story in ***L'Inter*** says a score of people were seriously injured in the south-eastern region of Fresco following clashes between local communities and aliens. According to the paper, a dispute over land ownership in the region has sparked the violence between members of the local community and Burkinabe aliens. The report

also says that government officials are trying to bring peace back to the region, while security forces are on high alert. "Nearly 30 persons were injured and two other are reported missing, as Burkinabe attack Kosso," says **Notre Voie (a daily close to the ruling FPI party)**, which is also reporting on the same event.

9. In another development, a front-page story in **Le Nouveau Courrier (a daily close to the ruling FPI party)** says that activities at the customs services are likely to be brought to a standstill, as customs workers are threatening to embark on a strike today. However, the report says that the workers are divided over the industrial action.

10. Finally, with a picture of President Obama on its front-page, **the weekly Moslem newspaper Islam Info** carries a prominent article saying that the American president opposes extremism. The full article, which appears on the back page, quotes President Obama as saying: "The US will never go to war against Islam." President Obama, the paper says, was speaking during a ceremony marking the anniversary of the Sept 11 terrorist attacks; and called on Americans to be "tolerant."

September 14, 2010

The ongoing electoral process is the major issue in today's Ivorian press which look at the chance of the three principal candidates in winning the elections. The dailies also report on the campaign for a peaceful election in Cote d'Ivoire. Another major report in the press says that an Ivorian has been arrested in US for arms smuggling.

1. A front-page story in **the state-owned daily *Fraternite Matin*** says the government has launched a campaign for peace in the run-up of the of the October 31 presidential elections in Cote d'Ivoire. According to the paper, Prime Minister Guillaume Soro, who was speaking yesterday during a meeting with leaders of the Ivorian civil society and workers unions, pleaded with them to help the government organize "an election that could reconcile the people and uphold peace in Cote d'Ivoire." Leaders of the civil society and workers unions also expressed optimism about the electoral process and assured the premier of their support. In a related development, the paper publishes a statement issued by the National Coordination of the Civil Society in Cote d'Ivoire which calls for a final electoral timetable and a security plan to be put in place during the elections.

2. A prominent story in ***Nord-Sud Quotidien (a daily close to the cabinet of the Prime Minister)*** quotes Soro, who urged the candidates in the up-coming presidential elections "to accept the verdict." According to the paper, the Prime Minister, during his meeting Monday with members of civic groups and leaders of the workers unions, insisted on the transparency of the voting, which he is quoted as saying, is one of the "pre-conditions" for a peaceful election. "Help us to sensitize Ivorians on the good organization of the elections," ***Le Nouveau Reveil (a daily close to the opposition PDCI-RDA party)*** quotes the Prime Minister as telling members of the civic groups and leaders of the Ivorian workers.

3. Another report in ***Fraternite Matin*** says the United Nations Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI) is to embark on a peace campaign ahead of the presidential elections. The report announces that the campaign is due to kick off on Sept 15 and is aimed at bringing the population to fully commit for peace at this crucial stage of the peace process in Cote d'Ivoire.

4. While efforts are underway for a peaceful election in Cote d'Ivoire, a front-page story in ***L'inter (an independent daily)*** says that the finalization of the voter list, the electoral process is likely to be engulfed in what the paper calls "another serious crisis." The paper suggests that the difference between the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) and the National Statistics Institute over the number of the polling stations to be set up for the voting as well as the question about who should print the voting cards and national ID cards could compromise efforts to holding the presidential elections slated for October 31. Meanwhile, an aid of the Ivorian Prime Minister, who is quoted by the paper, assured that the premier has not envisaged delaying the polls. Meite Sindou, the spokesperson of the Prime Minister, further indicated that "the Prime Minister is aware of Ivorian impatience to vote on October 31," reports the paper.

5. A few days after President Laurent Gbagbo approves the final voter list, ***Soir Info (an independent daily)*** says that Abidjan, the Ivorian economic capital, represents more than 33 percent of the total votes to be cast during the October 31 much-awaited presidential elections. Commenting the same figures, ***Le Nouveau Reveil*** forecasts that whoever wins in Abidjan and its surroundings could be the next president of Cote d'Ivoire. Under a prominent headline that says "Who is poised for an upright victory?" in the coming presidential elections, ***L'Intelligent d'Abidjan (an independent daily)*** rather predicts a second round ballot that would oppose two of three principal candidates including incumbent Laurent Gbagbo, former President Henri Konan Bedie and the Ivorian opposition heavyweight, Alassane Ouattara. To win, Gbagbo can count on his capacity as "a political animal," Ouattara on his "populism," while Bedie could rely on "the solid" implementation of his PDCI-RDA across the country, suggests the paper.

6. In another development, a prominent story in ***L'Intelligent d'Abidjan*** says an Ivorian national, who was trying to convoy weapons to Cote d'Ivoire in violation of a UN arms embargo imposed on this country, has been arrested in New York, US. N'Guessan Yao, 55, was bust Thursday for conspiring to export handguns, ammunition and tear gas grenades, report the paper. "An Ivorian arrested in the United States," says another prominent story in ***Le Nouveau Courrier (a daily close to the ruling FPI party)***.

September 13, 2010

A few days after President Laurent Gbagbo signed a finalized voter list, pro and anti-government Ivorian newspapers today and over the weekend say there is no obstacle on the way to the Ivorian long-delayed presidential elections slated for October 31. The dailies also report on the latest developments in the peace process underway in Cote d'Ivoire. The celebration of the end of Ramadan in Cote d'Ivoire and the festivities marking the 20th anniversary of the inauguration of the Basilica in Yamoussoukro are the other major news items.

1. With a picture of President Laurent Gbagbo signing a decree last Thursday at a ceremony at the Presidential Palace in Abidjan issuing national identity cards to people appearing on the voter list, ***the state-owned daily Fraternite Matin*** carried a banner headline reading: "October 31 presidential elections: The road is cleared." Speaking at the ceremony about the up-coming crucial presidential elections, the Ivorian leader reportedly said: "I don't want fighting. Whoever wins is the winner; whoever loses is the loser." Reacting to the presidential decree, Sokouri Bohui, a leading member of the ruling FPI party, was quoted by the paper as saying: "We've fought for the obstacles to be removed," while the Secretary General of the opposition PDCI-RDA party, Alphonse Djedje Mady, said: "The stage of the final electoral list marks an important step" in the electoral process underway in Cote d'Ivoire. Anne Oulotto, the spokesperson of the opposition RDR party, also called the presidential decree "an important step," reports the paper, which quoted the President of the National Islamic Council, Imam Idriss Koudous, as saying: "We're really moving towards peace."

2. ***Fraternite Matin*** also published the full text of a statement issued by the New Forces – the former Ivorian rebel movement, which welcome the decree that grants national identity cards to Ivorians. The statement says the New Forces welcome the presidential decision because "the identity issue has been one of the keys behind their commitment." The paper further carried a commentary saying that, with the signing of the decree, Ivorians can now heave a sigh of relief and rekindle hope that they will go to the polls on October 31 for the presidential elections. The writer, Agnes Kraidy, editor-in-chief, opines that "if we succeed in passing the October 31 test with intelligence, calm and serenity, we can commit ourselves to the construction of our nation."

3. In a related development, ***Soir Info (an independent daily)*** in its weekend edition informed readers that France commended the Ivorian political leaders for their agreement on the electoral list. The paper quoted a top French official as saying: "We welcome the announcement of an agreement between the political actors on the final electoral list and its adoption on Sept 18, 2010 by the presidential decree. It's an important step in the preparation of the presidential elections."

4. Meanwhile, Le ***Nouveau Reveil (a daily close to the opposition PDCI-RDA party)*** cautiously welcomed the consensus over the voter list. In a prominent story in its weekend issue, the paper suggested that, though the presidential decree granting national identity cards to people could be seen as a sign of "hope", this does not remove

all the bottlenecks on the way to the polls. The paper cautioned about the possibility by the President of the Republic to refer to the Article 48 of the country's Constitution to suspend the electoral process in an attempt to justify political violence, which the paper believes, could be created by the presidential camp in case they were defeated.

5. With more on the electoral process, a front-page story in today's edition of ***Fraternite Matin*** says that the Independent Election Commission, the body tasked with organizing the presidential elections, and the National Statistic Institute differ over the number of polling stations to be used during the coming elections. According to the paper, the electoral body is planning to open 22,000 polling stations, while the National Statistic Institute is talking about 16,387. In a related development, a front-page story in today's issue of ***Le Nouveau Reveil*** says that the National Statistic Institute has no competence to announce the number of polling stations. The paper attributes this statement to the head of the electoral commission, Youssouf Bakayoko. Bakayoko, who was speaking over the weekend after he officially received the final voter list, also assured that there will be no fraud in the printing of the ballot papers, reports ***Expression (a daily close to the opposition)***.

6. On another issues, ***Le Patriote (a daily close to the opposition RDR party)*** publishes a message delivered by an Ivorian Moslem leader during the Eid celebration. "Let's go to the polls in peace and the people will follow the winner," the paper quotes Cheick Boikary Fofana, the President of the High Council of Imams (COSIM) as saying on Friday in Abidjan. ***Le Quotidien (a daily close to the ruling FPI party)*** also quotes the Moslem leader, who told the gathering that "Religion is not a tool to be used to conquer power."

7. Reporting on the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the inauguration of the Basilica in Yamoussoukro on Sunday, ***Fraternite Matin*** quotes a Vatican envoy who urged all to be "respectful of God." Francis Cardinal Arinze also hoped that this celebration will bring peace back to Cote d'Ivoire.

September 9, 2010

The electoral process underway in Cote d'Ivoire and the deployment of the government's customs services to replace New Forces' tax collectors in the zones formerly under the control of the former rebel movement are the major issues in today's press. The dailies also report on the trial of former senior cocoa officials charged with corruption and fraud and efforts by the Ivorian authorities to stamp out the worst forms of child labor in this country.

1. A report in ***the state-owned daily Fraternite Matin*** says that the head of the UN Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI), Y. J. Choi has expressed "optimism" following the new dynamism in the Ivorian electoral process. According to the paper, Choi, who was speaking yesterday in Abidjan after talks with Ivorian opposition leader Alassane Ouattara, promised to do everything possible to enable the presidential elections to take place on October 31. A few days after the presidential candidates have all accepted a voter list produced by the electoral commission, the head of the UN mission reportedly said that he is waiting for the final voter's register for "analysis, evaluation and certification." The report further says that the UN boss described the agreement, which was reached Monday by the Ivorian political leaders on the voter list, as "an important turning point" in the ongoing electoral process, adding that with "this historic agreement" a crucial stage has been overcome before the voting.

2. A report in ***Nord-Sud Quotidien (a daily close to the cabinet of the Prime Minister)*** also quotes the head of the UN mission in Cote d'Ivoire as saying that "within a few weeks, national identity cards will be issued." Choi, the paper says, was speaking yesterday in Abidjan after a meeting with former Ivorian President Henri Konan Bedie, who is also a candidate in the forthcoming presidential elections. "Within a few weeks, thousands of persons will receive their identity cards for the first time in their life," the paper quotes Choi as saying. On security issues, a report in ***L'Expression (a daily close to the opposition)*** says that the head of the UN mission has assured that La Licorne [the French forces] and UN troops in Cote d'Ivoire will make sure that peace prevails during the elections. "UN troops and La Licorne will collaborate with the CCI, government forces and the New Forces Armed Forces to ensure a peaceful atmosphere during the elections," the paper quotes Choi as saying.

3. With more on the peace process underway in Cote d'Ivoire, a prominent story in ***Nord-Sud Quotidien*** says that the reunification process in Cote d'Ivoire is a good track, as government customs services were deployed in the zones formerly under the control of the New Forces. According to the paper, a ceremony was held in the northern city of Pogo Tuesday marking the official deployment of government administration in the regions. The paper quotes a top government official as saying that the deployment was the result of frank collaboration between the Ministry of Economy and Finance and the New Forces.

4. However, a report in ***Nord-Sud Quotidien*** says that the New Forces are still holding checkpoints in the central, northern and western zones of the country despite the fact

that the former combatants have returned to barracks as part of the disarmament program. Reacting to this issue, New Forces' spokesperson Affoussy Bamba explained that "those who have been demobilized should return to normal life. But since they have not yet been reintegrated, they put on again their uniforms and go back to the checkpoints."

5. In another development, the trial of former senior cocoa officials charged with corruption and fraud is the subject of prominent headlines in many Ivorian papers. A banner headline in ***Fraternite Matin*** says that the trial has been postponed until November 16, 2010 because "the conditions for the hearings are not yet met." The report also says that the hearings on the charges including embezzlement of public funds, fraud, forgery of documents, abuse of trust and of public goods, which opened yesterday in a court in Abidjan, was postponed following a writ introduced by lawyers of the accused. The paper also publishes the full list of the accused which includes former president of the Coffee and Cocoa Bourse (BCC) marketing body Lucien Tape Do, and former BCC managing director Tano Kassi Kadio.

6. Meanwhile, another prominent story in ***Le Nouveau Courrier (a daily close to the ruling FPI party)*** suggests that the trial of the former senior cocoa officials is likely to create instability and interfere with the ongoing electoral process in Cote d'Ivoire. "The fate of the former senior cocoa officials is now in the hands of the next president," says a prominent story in ***L'Intelligent d'Abidjan (an independent daily)*** which suspects that the presidential elections billed for October 31 could be the principal motive of the postponement. ***Le Patriote (a daily close to the opposition RDR party)*** denounces what it sees as a "masquerade," and publishes a statement issued by APDH, an Ivorian rights group, which deplores the delay of the trial.

7. On human rights issues, a report in ***Le Quotidien (a daily close to the ruling FPI party)*** says that the US Government has slammed Cote d'Ivoire over the worst forms of child labor in this country. According to the paper, a recent report documented by the USG on the issue was the main subject during a press conference addressed by the Ivorian Minister of Labor, Emile Guirieoulou, a few days ago. "Last July, the American government published a report which accused Cote d'Ivoire," the paper quotes the minister as saying. Guirieoulou also reportedly said that this report is evidence that "the police are not doing its job." Reporting on the same issue, ***L'Intelligent d'Abidjan*** warns that an embargo could be imposed on the cocoa produced by Cote d'Ivoire.

September 8, 2010

The recent political consensus over the final voter list and speculations on the case of individuals crossed off the subject register was the major topic in today's news. Dailies also talked about the trial of former high-ranking managers of the Ivorian cocoa and coffee sector who have been kept in custody since 2005 in connection with an alleged embezzlement scandal. A violent clash opposing elements of the New Forces military was reported on as well.

1. Ahead of the much-delayed presidential poll set for October 31, 2010, Ivorian political shareholders –including President Gbagbo and opposition heavyweights Henri Konan Bedie and Alassane Ouattara- have all agreed on the format of the final voter list. Providing details on the closed door discussions which have led to the political consensus, **Nord-Sud Quotidien (a daily close to the Ivorian Prime Minister)** noted that all parties agreed to take necessary actions to ensure the poll is held as planned. Thus, crucial questions related to the quality of voters, the printing of ballot papers and other technical issues have been discussed. A meeting with the facilitator of the Political Agreement of Ouagadougou, President Blaise Compaore, is scheduled on September 20 in Ouagadougou to finalize the process, the paper added.

According to the daily, the case of the 55.000 individuals who have been removed from the voter list because of discrepancies and/or lack of evidence to validate their quality as voters has been addressed in the course of the consultation. Thus, the paper said, these individuals will not be taking part in the presidential poll but could be cleared to vote during the legislative and municipal elections.

Still on the issue, **Le Patriote (a daily close to the opposition RDR party)** added that President Gbagbo is due to sign on Thursday an official decree establishing the voter list for the October 31 run up.

2. The trial of former Ivorian managers of the Ivorian cocoa and coffee sector allegedly accused of important embezzlement is due to open today in Abidjan. The state-owned daily **Fraternite Matin** noted that important security measures are being taken ahead of the much-awaited trial. Only a few registered and authorized media professionals will be allowed to cover the event, the paper said. [Note: Some former top officials of the cocoa and coffee sector have been in custody since 2008 following the allegations of embezzlement.]

3. A violent clash opposing elements of the New Forces Army occurred yesterday in Bouake. According to **Fraternite Matin**, the incident left three people seriously injured after an exchange of fire. The incident, the paper added, stemmed from a trivial dispute when elements under the command of New Forces Company Commander Ouattara Morou refused to stop at a checkpoint set up by another faction of the New Forces led by Commandant Cherif Ousmane. As a result of the argument, both groups shot at each other, the paper said.

Reporting on the incident, **L'intelligent d'Abidjan (an independent daily)** noted that Commandant Cherif Ousmane went to the scene of the incident to cool down the situation. The incident, the paper added, occurred a few days after the cantonment of Army staff from the New Forces in Bouake.

4. On human rights, **Le Patriote (a daily close to the opposition RDR party)** published an article on the issue of child labor in Cote d'Ivoire. According to the daily, some 500.000 children are forced to work under unbearable conditions in Cote d'Ivoire. Thus, the paper said, the country is named on the red list of countries where the worst

forms of child labor are still topical issues. Despite recent measures and a policy initiated by Ivorian authorities to prohibit and eliminate the phenomenon, efforts are still needed to reach the goal according to the Ivorian Labor Minister, Mr. Emile Guieouroulou who was addressing the issue yesterday in the course of a working meeting in his cabinet.

September 7, 2010

Reports in today's Ivorian press say that all Ivorian key political stakeholders have accepted a voter list produced by the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI), prompting hopes that Cote d'Ivoire's presidential elections, which have been delayed since 2005, may finally take place. The political atmosphere, especially the tone of the pre-electoral campaign underway in this country, and the trial of top Ivorian officials allegedly accused of embezzling money taken from the cocoa and coffee sector also make prominent headlines in the press.

1. A banner headline that runs across **the state-owned daily *Fraternite Matin*** says that Gbagbo, Bedie and Ouattara have accepted the final voter list that will be published this week by the CEI, the body tasked with organizing Cote d'Ivoire's long-delayed presidential elections. The report says that the decision was reached over the weekend during a meeting of members of the CPC – a committee overseeing the implementation of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement, including President Laurent, former President Henri Konan Bedie, Ivorian opposition leader Alassane Ouattara, Prime Minister Guillaume Soro and the Representative of Burkinabe President Blaise Compaore, the mediator in the Ivorian peace process, to evaluate the electoral process. "Together, we agree that the election of the president of the republic be held effectively on 31 October 2010. To this end, it was necessary to finish the final voter list. I am happy to announce to you that we have all agreed on the final voter list," the paper quotes the Prime Minister as saying after the meeting. Soro is further quoted as saying that "we have demanded that the electoral commission president, including all the bodies involved in the process, do what he can to make the electoral list available this week." The Ivorian premier also told reporters that "we have noted a real political willingness on the part of all the members of the inter-Ivorian political dialogue to do everything possible so that the election of the president of the republic is held on 31 October 2010."

2. With a picture of the four Ivorian political players – apparently smiling to the camera - on its front page, ***Nord-Sud Quotidien (a daily close to the cabinet of the Prime Minister)*** comments that the trail which will take Ivorians to the polls on October 31 has started moving. Monday's meeting, the paper further comments, has helped clear the way for the vote, as Gbagbo, Bedie and Ouattara have reached a consensus on the voter's register. According to the paper, the decision has prompted many Ivorians to rekindle hopes that the presidential elections, which have been delayed since 2005, will finally take place.

3. Reporting on the same meeting, ***Le Nouveau Reveil (a daily close to the opposition PDCI-RDA party)*** sounds optimistic with a headline reading: "At long last the voter list has been adopted." According to the report, the final voter's register for the October 31 presidential elections contains 5.7 million voters. In another report however, the paper claims that some 55,974 potential voters have been crossed off the list and subsequently cannot take part in the coming elections.

4. Meanwhile, **Le Nouveau Courrier (a daily close to the ruling FPI party)** carries a front-page story doubting whether the four leaders reached a consensus on the final voter list. The paper claims that, despite the Prime Minister saying after the meeting that "I am happy to tell you that, together, we agreed that the presidential election be held actually on 31 October 2010," the four leaders were not able to resolve the problem concerning those who have been removed from the electoral list. That the final communique released at the end of the meeting did not mention the case of these people is a sign that the voter list is not yet completed, comments the paper.

5. In a related development, a prominent story in **L'Intelligent d'Abidjan (an independent daily)** says that, despite the assurance given by the Ivorian political leaders to hold the elections on October 31, consultations are still underway to defer the presidential elections. In what the paper calls the blueprint of "another delay", it suggests that, despite the optimism following yesterday's meeting, the Ivorian political stakeholders are working on "the best formula" to announce a possible delay of the polls.

6. As Ivorian political leaders are engaged in a pre-electoral campaign, **L'Intelligent d'Abidjan** quotes a leading political figure as telling supporters that "if Gbagbo is declared the winner, you must stand up and reject his victory." According to the paper, a defiant-looking Innocent Anaky Kobena, leader of the opposition MFA party, who was speaking over the weekend at a political rally, told the gathering that "if on October 31 somebody appears on the national TV to say that Gbagbo has won, this means he [Gbagbo] has cheated, and you must stand up against his victory (...)"

7. With a picture of Anaky Kobena on its front page, **Le Mandat (a daily close to the opposition PDCI-RDA party)** quotes the opposition leader as telling supporters that the incumbent president and his ruling FPI party are preparing an electoral "hold-up". Meanwhile, a report in **L'inter (an independent daily)** says that the Ivorian opposition leaders are threatening President Gbagbo. "Whether you like it or not, you will quit," the paper quotes Amadou Gon Coulibaly, the campaign director of Alassane Ouattara as saying at a political gathering over the weekend. According to the paper, Coulibaly also vowed to fight what he called "Gbagbo's warlike speech," while he is reportedly quoted by **Le Nouveau Reveil** as swearing "to fight any intimidation." Another report in this paper says that some youth leaders from the opposition RDR party have warned President Gbagbo and vowed to prevent the president from clinging to power.

8. With more on the pre-electoral atmosphere prevailing in Cote d'Ivoire ahead of the October 31 presidential elections, **Soir Info (an independent daily)** carries a front-page story saying that President Gbagbo is taking a tougher stand. "When we hit, we'll hit right on the target," the paper quotes the president as saying during his just-ended official visit to the southern region of Agboville. According to the paper, the president, who was addressing a rally in this region, warned those who are trying to derail the electoral process and said: "I've asked the defense and security forces to bring under control, in the most severe manner, all those who will try to create mayhem."

9. But a report in **L'inter** quotes Albert Mabri Toikeusse, the leader of the opposition UDPCI party, as saying that "Gbagbo will fall without the support of the defense and security forces." According to the paper, the opposition leader was speaking at a rally over the weekend and called upon the Ivorian army "to reaffirm its patriotism and behave like brave soldiers who must uphold the Institutions and not the leaders." In a related development, the paper deplores that the Ivorian political leaders have torn apart the code of good conduct that they signed in April 2008 in order to create a peaceful atmosphere in the country. Meanwhile, a front-page story in **Le Temps (a daily close to the ruling FPI party)** says that Ivorian Moslem leaders, who gathered over the weekend as part of the Ramadan observation, called for peaceful elections.

10. On another development, **Fraternite Matin** in its weekend issue announced that the trial of top Ivorian officials allegedly accused of embezzling money taken from the Ivorian cocoa and coffee sector is due to start tomorrow in Abidjan. The paper attributed this to the spokesperson of the State Prosecutor, Diakite Mamadou, who was speaking at a press conference on Friday. With the pictures of some of the heads of the cocoa and coffee industry, who have been jailed for their alleged involvement in the financial scandal, the paper also hinted that four ministers and 28 other top officials will appear before the court.

September 03, 2010

Cote d'Ivoire's presidential elections set for October 31 and the political fever in this country in the run-up to the much-awaited polls are the major issues in today's Ivorian press. President Laurent Gbagbo's state visit to the southern city of Agboville, the launching of an N1H1 immunization campaign and the ongoing US-backed talks between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas aimed at brokering a peace deal are the major issues in the press today.

1. After the legal contentions on the provisional electoral lists, the United Nations Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI) is demanding the publication of the final voter's list, says a report in **Le Nouveau Courrier (a daily close to the ruling FPI party)**. According to the paper, UNOCI spokesperson Hamadoun Toure, who was speaking yesterday in Abidjan at a press conference, exhorted the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) to finalize the voter's list, adding that the finalization of the voter's register constitutes a major step in the organization of the long-delayed presidential elections officially set for October 31. "The electoral process has now reached a crucial stage," **Nord-Sud Quotidien (a daily close to the cabinet of the Prime Minister)** also quotes the UNOCI's spokesperson as saying at the press conference.

2. As efforts are underway for the voting to take place on October 31, **Soir Info (an independent daily)** announces important meetings billed to bring together Cote d'Ivoire's key political players in order to set the ground for a peaceful atmosphere before, during and after the elections. The paper also hints that the meetings are set to take place this month and could bring together both political leaders and military commanders. President Gbagbo, Prime Minister Guillaume Soro and the two principal opposition leaders Henri Konan Bedie and Alassane Ouattara will set the stage, as they will be meeting as part of the second round of the inter-Ivorian dialogue, writes the paper. It also suggests that the four leaders will use the opportunity to evaluate commitments they made during their first talks two months ago. The paper also announces a meeting of the CPC – the committee overseeing the implementation of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement - that could bring together the Ivorian key political stakeholders and the mediator in the peace process, Burkinabe President Blaise Compaore.

3. On the much-awaited presidential elections, a prominent story in **Notre Voie (a daily close to the ruling FPI party)** says that President Gbagbo has cleared away doubt over the date of the date of the polls. "October 31 will mark the renaissance," the paper quotes the Ivorian leader as saying yesterday during his current official visit to the southern region of Agboville. The paper further quotes the Ivorian leader, who assured his fellow citizens that "The elections will take place on October 31 and that we have taken all the measures to lift all the obstacles on the way to the polls." In a related development, the Ivorian First Lady, Simone Ehivet Gbagbo, who was speaking yesterday at a political rally in Abidjan, is quoted by the paper as saying: "Those who think there won't be elections on October 31 will be disappointed." "Gbagbo confirms the date and warns troublemakers," says a prominent story in the state-owned daily

Fraternite Matin, which further comments that the ballots will bring to the end the crisis in Cote d'Ivoire.

4. With more on the electoral process, a report in **Soir Info** says the Ivorian youth has shown the way to the country's political leaders on how to safeguard a peaceful atmosphere. According to the paper, Kouadio Konan Bertin, leader of the youth wing of the opposition PDCI-RDA party, and Charles Ble Goude, the leader of the pro-ruling FPI party's Young Patriots movement, met yesterday to broker a peace deal between members of FESCI – Cote d'Ivoire Students' Federation. According to the paper, the two youth leaders also used the occasion to call for a peaceful political campaign.

5. On health issues, a report in **Fraternite Matin** says that the government launched yesterday an N1H1 immunization campaign in Abidjan. According to the paper, the program was launched with the financial support of the World Health Organization, which will provide 2 billion vaccines in order to fight the virus.

6. Finally, a report in **L'inter (an independent daily)** says that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas have shown their good intentions as they are meeting in Washington as part of the US-backed peace process. The paper however reports that despite the two sides' willingness to resolve their differences, there are still some obstacles to overcome.

September 02, 2010

The electoral process continued to be in the limelight in today's press articles. Ivorian dailies said financial efforts are being made to meet the date October 31 - the date slated for the much-delayed presidential poll. A donation of voting equipment offered by the government of Japan to support the process underway, and the distribution of a media guide ahead of the presidential elections made the news as well. President Gbagbo's state visit to the southeastern city of Agboville and the national tribute to Ivorian literature pioneer Bernard Dadie were reported on as well.

1. As time is running out, with only 58 days left before the holding of the much-delayed presidential poll, the Ivorian government is taking measures to ensure funds are available on time. **L'intelligent d'Abidjan (an independent daily)** informed readers that some CFA 40 billions are available so far, according to the Ivorian Minister of Finance, Mr. Charles Koffi Diby. The information, the daily said, was given yesterday in the course of a meeting chaired by Mr. Diby. As of yesterday, a total of CFA 16 billion have been disbursed. The remaining amount will be provided following a precise timetable to ensure provision of funds to cover the electoral process, the daily added. "In case foreign financial sponsors fail to assist us, we shall take up the slack," Mr. Diby was reported as saying.

2. Still on the electoral process, **Le Nouveau Courrier (a daily close to the ruling FPI party)** noted that the government of Japan has donated an important package of voting equipment to the Independent Election Commission (CEI). The donation, which

amounted to some CFA 3.7 billions, was handed over to the chairman of the Commission, Mr. Youssouf Bakayoko, by Japanese Ambassador in Cote d'Ivoire Okamura Yoshifumi, the paper said. A set of 22.000 ballot boxes and 60.000 polling booths are part of the material assistance provided. According to Ambassador Okamura, the move is to support Ivorians in the electoral process. "I am delighted to see Ivorian political actors committed to meet the date of October 31 (...) and I call on the Ivorian people to avoid violence throughout the process and uphold the principle of democracy," the paper reported the Japanese Ambassador as saying.

3. An official media guide outlining how media are expected to cover the presidential electoral period was presented to Ivorian media professionals yesterday. Reporting on the issue, **Nord-Sud Quotidien (a daily close to the Ivorian Prime Minister)** noted that the ceremony brought together the Ivorian Minister in charge of Communication, Mr. Sy Savanne, and the Chairman of the National Assembly, Pr. Mamadou Koulibaly. On the occasion, Mr. Savane noted that the guide is a resourceful document calling on journalists to report responsibly during the sensitive phase of elections. Although the Chairman of the National Assembly did not make a public statement, insiders reported him as saying the guide is also meant for politicians for a timely and peaceful holding of the poll. Mr. Franck Anderson Kouassi, the Chairman of the National Audiovisual Communication Council (CNCA) noted on his part that the document was the result of a fruitful collaboration between media watchdogs and the National Election Commission. The bottom line of this handbook is to call on journalists and media in general to ensure peace is not endangered during the critical period.

4. President Gbagbo is due to initiate today a three-day visit in the southeastern region of Agboville. **The state-owned daily Fraternite Matin** noted that the event is in the framework of a state visit which will start today in Azaguie. A series of rallies and addresses are scheduled on the occasion, the paper said.

5. On cultural issues, most dailies (including **L'Expression, L'intelligent d'Abidjan and Le Nouveau Reveil**) reported on the national tribute paid to the pioneer of the Ivorian literature, Mr. Bernard Dadie. Fraternite Matin carried prominent illustrated reports on the two-day ceremony held last Monday and Tuesday in Abidjan to honor the Ivorian most famous novelist, poet and playwright. On the occasion, his rich bibliography, including a poem written when living in the United States was presented to the public. "There is no great writer if there is no great issue to write on," President Gbagbo was reported as saying in his address.

Still on the topic, **L'intelligent d'Abidjan (an independent daily)** published an interview of US Public Affairs Officer, Sita Liane Chakrawarti in which she said: "I am honored to be part of the ceremony to pay tribute to him. He is a great writer and an important person. As he said, his writing goes beyond the African continent." [Note: Mrs. Chakrawarti read on the occasion, Bernard Dadie's poem entitled Christmas – a poem he wrote while he was in the USA.]

September 1, 2010

The Ivorian electoral process, especially the voter's register to be used during the October 31 presidential elections, is the subject of prominent stories in today's Ivorian press. The dailies also report on the ongoing disarmament process, calls for lifting the UN arms embargo on Cote d'Ivoire and Ivorian-French bilateral relations.

1. A few days after the legal contentions on the provisional electoral lists officially finished, **Le Nouveau Courrier (a daily close to the ruling FPI)** carries a prominent headline questioning "the credibility" of the voter's register. The paper also says that the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) is currently working to establish the final voter's register, but points out that, given the circumstances surrounding the just-ended electoral contentions, the final voter's lists in the making are poised to spark controversy. According to the paper, a lot of demands for names to be removed or restored on the voter's lists were ignored, and the process itself was marred by dysfunction in many constituencies.

2. In a related development, **Le Nouveau Reveil (a daily close to the opposition RDR party)** quotes an aide to President Laurent Gbagbo as saying: "The votes will take place, but not with the list of the CEI." According to the paper, Zahiri Ziki, the president's adviser on population identification issues, who was speaking Tuesday in Abidjan during a conference, also announced political "upheavals" that, he reportedly said, "won't prevent the elections from taking place on October 31."

3. With more on the voter's register, a report in **L'inter (an independent daily)** says that the Ivorian civil society has denounced the non-respect of the modus operandi during the judicial process on the provisional electoral lists. According to the paper, this was made public yesterday during a press conference organized by the Ivorian civil society to present a report carried out by its observation mission on the ground. The paper quotes the report as saying that in the central city of Divo, for instance, 1,829 names were stricken off the voter's lists without taking into consideration the decisions of the electoral commission. The report also mentions other areas, such Abengourou (eastern), Man (west) and many other regions where the process was either disrupted or halted as a result of misunderstandings. The report, the paper further says, recommends that the electoral body should take every means possible to correct these mistakes in order to design a final and reliable voter's list.

4. **L'inter** also carries another report drawing lessons from the just-ended legal procedures designed to figure out who is qualified or not to vote in Cote d'Ivoire. While the paper expresses delight that, despite some problems, the process ended without a major disaster, it also notes that the process has showed that the question of who is an Ivorian and who is not remains a concern in Cote d'Ivoire. The paper also notes that the process has again brought to light the controversy over the Ivorian nationality issue. It however hails the country's judiciary system, the overseer of the exercise, for not having fallen into what it sees as "a vicious test" into which the country's political leaders tried to throw it. The paper further suggests that this was made possible because the judges

sitting on the cases relating to the voter's list contentions preferred to throw into dustbin some demands to remove names that did not conform to the procedure.

5. Under a prominent headline that says "Guillaume Soro ruins Gbagbo and the FPI," **Le Jour Plus (a daily close to the opposition)** welcomes the successful completion of the judicial procedures on the voter's list. According to the paper, this was made possible thanks to the Prime Minister's leadership, who, the paper says, has reaffirmed his authority on all the electoral process. Another headline in this paper says that the prevailing political atmosphere is favorable for elections, quoting the leadership of the New Forces that welcomed the fact that the financial problems, which could hold back the electoral process, have been resolved. In the same vein, **Soir Info (an independent daily)** quotes Gal Soumaila Bakayoko, the Commander of the New Forces Armed Forces, as saying that "October 31 will be a reality." **The state-owned daily Fraternite Matin** puts similar words into the mouth of a top aide to the Prime Minister who said: "October 31 is tenable."

6. In another development, **Fraternite Matin** reports that a top Ivorian army officer Tuesday denounced the lack of equipment that is undermining the work of the country's defense and security forces. Gal Edouard Kassarate, the head of the gendarmerie, was speaking at a ceremony in Abidjan, where he called on the United Nations and the international community "to lift immediately" the arms embargo that has been "unjustly" imposed on Cote d'Ivoire.

7. The other major issue in **Fraternite Matin** is however the relations between Cote d'Ivoire and France, its former colonial master. With a picture of President Laurent Gbagbo and French Ambassador to Cote d'Ivoire Jean Marc Simon cutting the ribbon to reopen a French school that was destroyed during political violence in this country, the paper quotes the Ivorian leader as saying: "I want our relations to be built on a solid foundation." However, **Le Nouveau Reveil** denounces "incoherence" in the president's speech when it comes to relations between the two countries. The paper also quotes the French Ambassador as saying that "Once the peace process is effective, we'll establish a normal relation between France and Cote d'Ivoire."