

## Open Letter to the United Nations Security Council on the Situation in Cote d'Ivoire

International Crisis Group Louise Arbour 20 Dec 2010 As the Security Council meets today, we urge Members to take note of the gravity of the situation in Cote d'Ivoire and recognize the risk of a precipitous return to civil war or partition if the international community fails to remain firm in its support to the peace process and a democratic transition in the country. We welcome the steps taken thus far by the Secretary-General and his representatives, as well as the statements by the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) recognizing Mr. Alassane Ouattara as the President-elect of Cote d'Ivoire and calling for Mr. Gbagbo to abide by the will of the Ivoirian people and yield power.

**Mr. Laurent Gbagbo's refusal to accept the elections results and cede authority should be declared a coup d'etat by the Security Council and recognized as a threat to the ongoing peace process and unity of the country.**

(...) respect for the results of recent presidential elections and the transition of authority is an essential element of continuing the peace process and preventing a slide back into war. Any agreement on power-sharing or national unity would only prolong the crisis and reward illegal actions to undermine free and fair elections.

The reported attacks on civilians and UN peacekeepers by security and militia forces loyal to Laurent Gbagbo are unacceptable and the demands by Mr. Gbagbo for the United Nations peacekeeping and French forces to withdraw from the country must be found illegitimate and rejected.

**We urge the Security Council to renew the mandate of the UN mission in Cote d'Ivoire** and back ongoing regional efforts to resolve the crisis.

Through its statements and the renewal of UNOCI's mandate, the **Security Council should demonstrate unequivocal support for the unified position of the international community to respect the elections results and send clear messages on the responsibilities of the parties to protect the population and ensure accountability for those who incite violence and commit human rights violations.**

The Council should reiterate its commitment to supporting UNOCI's role in the protection of civilians and consider ways to enhance the mission's capacity in this regard.

As dialogue with the parties continues, punitive measures should be put in place to help shift the calculations of not only Mr. Gbagbo, but other government, military and security leaders who are hostile to the peace process by failing to recognize legitimate elections results or who commit violations of human rights.

**These leaders should be reminded of their individual criminal liability for human rights**

**violations committed by them or those under their command and individual sanctions, including by the UN, must be updated, enacted and enforced immediately.**

Further, isolating the illegitimate government's access to external resources, such as through its suspension in international and regional organizations and restricting access to financial resources such as through the Central Bank of West African State (BCEAO) should be urgently pursued to facilitate a resolution to the crisis. More could be done by the international community to urge responsible action by business and trade partners, particularly in the cocoa and oil industries.

A military solution to the crisis in Cote d'Ivoire is unlikely; therefore, a determined position of the UN Security Council to manage the conflict now and prevent further escalation of violence in the country is urgently required.