



IVORIAN PEACE PROCESS

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RESOLUTION 1721: IMPERATIVE OF STAYING FOCUSED, FIRM & UNITED

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In recognition of the role and achievements of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) in Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding in Africa, particularly in West Africa, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations at its substantive session of 2006 granted WANEP Special Consultative Status to the UN. WANEP is therefore mandated to designate official representatives to the United Nations in New York, Geneva and Vienna to further its advocacy and outreach strategies for peace and human security.

1. INTRODUCTION

On November 1, 2006, United Nations' Security Council adopted Resolution 1721 extending the mandate of President Laurent Gbagbo and Prime Minister Charles Konan Banny for another one year. Barely six weeks after the adoption of Resolution 1721, uncertainty, political tension and bickering, have again beset the peace train. The toxic waste dumping scandal in Abidjan triggered the tussle for power and supremacy between President Gbagbo and Prime Minister Banny that surprised few observers. Prime Minister Banny had suspended the Director Generals of the Ports Authority of Abidjan and Customs, and the Governor of the District of Abidjan pending investigations. Upon the release of results of the findings, President Gbagbo signed a decree reinstating the suspended officials. Another decree sacked the Director Generals of the state owned media houses-the radio and television (RTI) and *Fraternité Matin* print press.

WEST AFRICA EARLY WARNING & EARLY RESPONSE NETWORK (WARN)

The West Africa Early Warning and Early Response Network (WARN) is an integral part of the West Africa Preventive Peacebuilding Program co-ordinated by the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP). Through its WARN Program, WANEP is setting the stage for a civil society-based early warning and response network in Africa with emphasis on human security.

WARN covers the entire Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) sub-region including Cameroon and Chad. Our focus was initially the Mano River Basin countries of Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia, and Côte d'Ivoire. We have since expanded to cover the entire West Africa sub-region.

Since 2002, WANEP entered into an agreement with ECOWAS through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in the framework of capacity building in Conflict Prevention. One of the goals of this agreement is to interface WARN with the ECOWAS Early Warning Systems to optimize early warning conflict prevention in West Africa. In view of this development, WANEP has been operating a liaison office located at the ECOWAS Secretariat in Abuja, Nigeria since April 2003.

The Prime Minister denounced the Presidential decrees and expressed his determination to ignore them. Prime Minister Banny's defiance was seen as a move towards assertiveness on his part in the framework of his 'enlarged' powers, President Gbagbo and his supporters (who claim to be defenders of the constitution) interpreted Banny's moves as nothing but rebellious. Behind this confrontation lies a trench of grudges and tension, particularly between the President's supporters and the

international monitoring group (GTI) that has backed Banny and supported street action against the President's 'controversial' decrees. Meanwhile, Soro Guillaume, the Secretary-General of the rebel group (Forces Nouvelles) seems unconcerned with what is happening in Abidjan. He also defied the Prime Minister and signed decrees restructuring his zone of influence. At the time of writing this policy brief, the President took an unprecedented step to propose a new peace plan in disregard of the United Nations plan that reduces his powers. He proposed dismantling the buffer zone that divides the rebel-held north from the government-run south.¹ The Security Council was swift in its response calling on all parties to cooperate with the Prime Minister. The President of the Security Council Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser of Qatar read a statement reiterating support for the UN-authorized International Working group (IWG) mandated to monitor progress in the Ivorian peace process.²

In this policy brief, we attempt an analysis of the issues that may impede the peace process during the specified twelve months. Specifically:

- a) We have made an analysis, albeit critical, of Resolution 1721 bringing on board the ideas that informed the resolution and how the final document fell short of expectations of parties and the implications;
- b) We examine the implications of the power tussle between Prime Minister Banny and President Gbagbo and intervening factors that may affect the peace process;
- c) We propose options for response, recommending particularly the opening up of new fronts in the mediation and dialogue process (that does not contravene the ongoing process in any way) between President Gbagbo and his northern neighbours of Mali and Burkina Faso and (more especially) dialogue with France.
- d) We conclude that the key issues of disarmament and elections should be the central focus and none of these should be conditional, cautioning that the international community must not be derailed or distracted.

2. Resolution 1721: Highlights, Critical Insights & Implications for Peace

The journey to Resolution 1721 was full of expectations of a major shift in the peace process. Politics being not a rational game, the outcome was a compromise document in the name of peace. Yet, such a compromise might end up as a liability at the cost of peace or rather still in favour of a status quo. This section examines the challenges of the current peace process in the framework of Resolution 1721.

2.1. Major highlights of Resolution 1721

Key highlights of the resolution include:

- Article 1 of the resolution stresses that the overall aim in line with the decisions of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union is to ensure the full implementation of the peace process in Cote d'Ivoire and organizing free, open, fair and transparent elections by October 31, 2007. Full implementation of the peace process in relation to Resolution 1721 led by the Prime Minister requires full compliance by all Ivorian parties and that no legal provisions should be invoked by them to obstruct the process (Article 4).
- President Laurent Gbagbo remains Head of State as from November 1, 2006 for a new and final transition period not exceeding 12 months. Equally, Prime Minister

¹ See Cote D'Ivoire: President Proposes Alternative Peace Plan to the UN.
<http://allafrica.com/stories/200612200872.html>

² Read more on Cote d'Ivoire: Security Council Says All Parties Must Cooperate with Prime Minister. UN News Service (New York) December 21, 2006

Charles K. Banny's mandate is renewed for a final transition not exceeding 12 months and he shall not be eligible to stand as candidate for the 2007 Presidential elections (Article 5&6). Prime Ministers road map (Article 7) task include:

- Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme;
 - Identification of population and registration of voters in order to compile a credible electoral register;
 - Operations of disarmament, demobilization and dismantling of militias;
 - Restoration of State authority and redeployment of the administration and public services throughout the national territory;
 - Technical preparations for the elections;
 - Restructuring of the Armed Forces.
- Prime Minister must have "necessary powers, appropriate financial, material and human resources as well as full and unfettered authority, consistent with ECOWAS recommendations, and must be empowered to take all necessary decisions, in all matters, within the Council of Ministers or Council of Government, by ordinances or decrees-laws" (Article 8). The Prime Minister must also have the "necessary authority over the Defence and Security Forces of Cote d'Ivoire" and "full authority over the Government he would form" (Article 9 &10)

The rest of the articles in the resolution emphasize the details of the task. Other prominent decisions include: Active Involvement of civil society and women's groups; put an end to incitement to hatred and violence through media, urging the Prime Minister to establish and implement without delay a code of conduct for the media; President Denis Sassou Nguesso as the mediator in his capacity as Chairperson of the African Union; AU and ECOWAS to continue to monitor and follow up the peace process and make a review of progress achieved before February 1, 2007; neighbouring countries to prevent any cross-border movement of combatants or arms into Cote d'Ivoire; guarantee the security and freedom of movement of all Ivorian nationals throughout the national territory; serious concern over violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

Resolution 1721 constitutes a major milestone in the peace process in Cote d'Ivoire. However, major weakness still abound. First, 1721 mentions "full, necessary authority, full and unfettered authority and enlarged powers" are requirements for Prime Minister Banny to lead the peace process but fails short of saying how these full, necessary and unfettered powers would be acquired. The constitutional prerogatives are still in favour of President Gbagbo. Suspending the constitution would have been violently opposed. The language of the resolutions was geared towards suspending the constitution, an idea that was defeated in the process. The UN and the rest of the international community are aware that setting the constitution aside may turn out to be counter-productive. Secondly, the UN mandate has not shifted to peace enforcement. By focusing this phase on powers of the Prime Minister, it is evident that any failure would be blamed on the Prime Minister who ironically is now expected to do what previous mediators; the UN and the rest of the international community at large have been unable to do for more than four years.

2.2. Resolution 1721: Of Powers, Political Will & Peace Implementation

The stalemate in the peace process has always resulted in a systemic passing of bucks. An impression created so far by a greater part of the influential international community together with the Ivorian opposition (both armed and unarmed) seems persuaded that

President Gbagbo and his patriotic youths are responsible for the stalled peace process. President Gbagbo and his supporters on the other hand see all moves in the four year long peace process as an attempt to undermine his presidency by all means. With these opposing and embedded perceptions, it is difficult to break the deadlock without being seen as biased.

2.2.1. Pre-Resolution 1721 opposition expectations dashed

In order to anticipate the possibilities of successful breakthrough in the peace process by Resolution 1721, one must not ignore the arguments that characterized the pre-resolution phase and how these arguments are influencing today's actions and inactions. Prior to the ECOWAS extraordinary summit that emerged with the recommendations that constituted the corner stone of Resolution 1721, the opposition pro-Houphouet coalition (RHDP) under the aegis of the so-called G7 had maintained that President Gbagbo must leave the Presidency as condition sine quo non-for peaceful elections. Members of this group advocated for the suspension of the constitution, which the President has been clinging onto whenever he felt he was losing out. The G7 lately advocated sweeping powers for the Prime Minister although they had opposed the guide to the public courts (*audience forraines*) published by the Prime Minister to regulate the identification process that stalled due to controversy over the procedure and issuance of certificates of nationality. There was a strong campaign by this group to ensure that President Thabo Mbeki³ should not be maintained as mediator of the peace process, an objective that was achieved. Thabo Mbeki in one of his submissions to the UN had indicted the rebellion for blocking the peace process, a stance that did not go well with the 'politically correct' world.

2.2.2. The Constitution, Gbagbo's anchor

President Gbagbo on his part pushed forward arguments that might have caught the attention of many sympathizers, especially at the level of the African Union and United Nations Security Council. In his 'thesis' presented before the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government extraordinary summit in Abuja, Gbagbo drew attention to the fact that there was an attempted coup against his democratically elected government⁴ and that ECOWAS and the rest of the international community condemned, calling for respect for constitutional legality. President Gbagbo could not understand why he, the democratically elected leader, is now treated as if he was the one who staged the coup. He argued that the constitution remained basis of his power and he would defend it at all times, pointing out that one of his political opponents today (Henri Konan Bedié) inserted the clause that a serving President would only hand over power to an elected successor. President Gbagbo went ahead to declare that he alone has made all the concessions since the outbreak of the crisis and the only requirement from the rebellion (disarmament) has been relegated to the background.

The constitution was spared, and Gbagbo had cause to celebrate. Attempts by France, a permanent member of the Security Council and drafter of the UN resolutions on Cote

³ If any thing, observers acknowledge that though Mbeki was influenced by his nationalist drive as an ANC activist and saw the Ivorian crisis from that prism, he should be credited for institutionalizing a methodical approach and securing of ground breaking concessions from President Gbagbo including the clause to allow Alassane Ouattara contest for the presidency.

⁴ The issue of Gbagbo's legitimacy has been used as justification for the many concessions given his opposition. While this may be a point, care must be taken because most African leaders recognized by the international community have been dismally elected in heavily boycotted rigged elections by incumbents such as Cameroon, Gabon, Chad, Central African Republic and Guinea to name but a few.

d'Ivoire, to reduce Gbagbo's margin of manoeuvre was opposed by the US, China, Russia and Tanzania. According to a national tabloid⁵, President Gbagbo was already contemplating an alternative and radical strategy that was going to render 1721 useless. He had initiated a consultation process to appoint Soro Guillaume as the Prime Minister in a cabinet that was going to exclude all the unarmed opposition.

2.2.3. Post 1721 reactions

President Gbagbo's immediate reaction⁶ to Resolution 1721 was that the debate whether the sovereignty of Cote d'Ivoire would be compromised with the suspension of or modification of the constitution by the United Nations has been put to an end. He stated that any doubts contained in the text of the resolution connote a violation of the constitution of the Republic of Cote D'Ivoire and shall not be accepted. Sounding disappointed at the way the UN and the international community handled the matter, President Gbagbo called on his compatriots to look inward for peace by rallying around the constitution and institutions of the Republic. The army through the Chief of Defence Staff, General Philippe Mangou in reaction pledged their allegiance to the Head of State. "The defence and security forces of Cote d'Ivoire support you fully in your capacity as President of the Republic and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces....armed forces reaffirm their commitment to the fundamental law of the Republic and its institutions", Mangou assured.⁷

Prime Minister Banny on the other hand said Resolution 1721 constitutes a new and ultimate framework to respond to the crisis in Cote d'Ivoire. Banny said there was no need for alternatives, insisting the imperative to shun on divisive interpretations that instead lead to accentuating the fissures and divisions. Making it clear that 1721 has defined roles for all, the Prime Minister declared that he would assume his responsibilities and execute the mission entrusted to him to the fullest. He promised to go to work immediately by embarking on the identification process, including delivery of certificates of nationality,⁸ re-ignite the DDR process, institute a new framework for military dialogue and restructuring of the army, the reunification of the country, and restoration of the authority of the state throughout the national territory and ensure the freedom of movement of all citizens.

2.2.4. Two Kings in one Palace

The risk of Resolution 1721 becoming the new basis for further political divide is high. The Prime Minister has the support of the international community and sees 1721 as an endorsement of his intermediary effort to restore peace. He cannot succeed in this effort without the cooperation first from the President and then all the key political leaders. The President on the other hand sees attempts to strengthen the Prime Minister's position as a snub of his stewardship as President of the Republic. He has therefore sought to influence the political terrain by playing the nationalist card and presenting the international community (and by association the Prime Minister) as the problem. In brief, the President has skilfully manoeuvred the stakes to appear to the people of Cote d'Ivoire that he stands for the interest of the country and it is the Prime Minister who is serving foreign interests.

⁵ Assoumane Bamba, *Nord-Sud* newspaper, Friday November 10, 2006.

⁶ November 2, 2006 address to the nation.

⁷ *Jeune Afrique Intelligent*, 12th -18th November 2006 (translation is ours).

⁸ According to the Chairman of the Electoral Commission, Prime Minister Banny him self does not have an ID card.

The confidence that the International Community through the United Nations reposed in the Prime Minister by giving him a strong hand under Resolution 1721 could (unexpectedly) pose a new threat in the peace process with a likely consequence of a stalemate in Cote d'Ivoire. Evidently, the key issue necessary to turn the wheels of the peace train may not turn out to be the powers of the Prime Minister. The factor of who is in command is very fundamental. However in Cote d'Ivoire, it is not just all about authority, but how that authority can be legitimized and used to successfully carry forward the peace process. The real challenge is not in how strong the resolution is crafted or what executive powers the Prime Minister should wield. The vital political will, consensus and commitment to peace are what must be sought⁹. This cannot happen when Gbagbo and Banny assume a confrontational stance in this delicate moment of the transition. The key to the solution revolves around how to build bridges amongst the key political stakeholders in Cote d'Ivoire starting with the President and the Prime Minister in order to minimise the deep seated mistrust and suspicion that has befallen the country.

3. Stakeholder Variables likely to affect the Peace Process

3.1. Kofi Annan's exit from United Nations

The term of office of Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations comes to an end on 31st December 2006. The departure of Annan might have a significant impact on the Ivorian dossier. It is not clear whether the in-coming UN boss would have the same passion that Annan had. Besides, the Ghanaian diplomat had to lean on the French for support during his most difficult challenges at the helm of the UN particularly around his objection of the war in Iraq and the oil for food scandal. This suggests that probably French views on the Ivorian dossier might have easily sailed through.

The recalcitrance of the Sudanese government of El Bashir against the UN intervention in Darfur is indirectly hardening President Gbagbo's position as he learns that the UN can be opposed. In addition, the passion of an African to end an African crisis that could easily spill over into his own country has been a driving force in Annan who resolutely ensured that peace was restored in Cote d'Ivoire. Annan easily accepted the deployment of a French force (Licorne) in support of the UN forces (ONOCI) but not under UN command. This idea has been criticized as ambiguous and an indication of a peculiar French interest that spans beyond protecting its citizens.

Kofi Annan's departure also coincides with the resignation of the controversial US Ambassador to the UN, John Bolton who also had his own views on the Cote d'Ivoire case. It is not certain that with these changes, the vigour and passion on the Ivorian file would remain the same. Whichever direction the change assumes would also determine the fate of the peace process in Cote d'Ivoire.

3.2. Elections in France, Nigeria DR Congo

Three elections remain very significant to the peace process in Cote d'Ivoire. First, the elections in France in mid 2007 may see a major change in the French policy towards

⁹ The challenge here is that some people are of the opinion that peace in Cote d'Ivoire means chasing President Gbagbo out of power. Such a move may end up being the greatest disaster in the magnitude of Iraq.

Cote d'Ivoire. Although nations have permanent interests and not permanent friends (and by implication no permanent enemies likewise), the new French leadership be it the Socialists (so called friends of President Gbagbo who himself belongs to the Socialist International movement) or the nationalist inclined Nicholas Sarkozy who in his electioneering campaign already started framing a new French attitude towards Africa (Sarkozy wants to opt out of direct French meddling in African politics) would see many changes. This would surely reduce the tension between France and Cote d'Ivoire. In a related matter, the French military support to regimes in Chad and Central African Republic in the face of rebel onslaughts has buttressed Gbagbo's claims of a conspiracy against his regime. That France invoked its defence agreement with these other countries to thwart a rebellion; same accord that Gbagbo invoked but France refused to help calling the Ivorian case an internal matter is inconsistent and creates room for varied interpretations.

The second is the Nigerian Elections. Nigeria commonly referred to as the 'Giant of Africa' goes to the polls by April 2007. Already, there are cries of an ineffective voter registration process and other related discrepancies. The lapses in the Nigeria electoral process would certainly be comforting to Gbagbo's supporters who can now say Cote d'Ivoire is not alone. It should be recalled that Nigeria and by implication ECOWAS' capacity to influence the process or exert its leverage on the peace process would greatly be determined by elections in Nigeria, given that President Obasanjo was a frontline mediator in the Cote d'Ivoire crisis.

Third is the successful election in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo) under the auspices of the United Nations. That DR Congo with its complexities and uncertainties succeeded in conducting a historic election in which the loser accepted defeat (after an initial refusal) is an indicator of hope. The Congo example depended on the attitude of the political players than on any single political decision or action. The lessons of the DR Congo would be an asset to the electoral process in Cote d'Ivoire.

3.3. Indifference to ongoing Process

There is an apparent impression that some actors of the Ivorian political scene may glide to the point of indifference for strategic reasons. Such indifference may not be unrelated to the fact that Resolution 7121 almost focused attention on Prime Minister Banny and sidelines all other major actors. Some of these actors including the former rebels (*forces nouvelles*) have been anticipating a situation where there would be a constitutional void in the country and a new arrangement made in which President Gbagbo is put aside. It is not therefore in the rebels' interest to see a quick end to the crisis¹⁰.

Any thing done to delay the process keeps the rebellion more politically relevant. Recent decrees by Soro Guillaume to re-baptize their forces as *Forces de Défense et de Sécurité des Forces Nouvelles*, (defence and security forces of the new forces) rename their zone as the Zone Centre Nord (Centre North Zone) and appointment of quasi ministerial departments is a major challenge and violation of the peace process and defiance of the Prime Minister. This move like many others seems to have passed 'unnoticed' as the radar of the international community focuses mainly on Abidjan and

¹⁰ In September 2006 in Bouaké when asked to comment on the fact that the rebels were benefiting from the war economy and therefore are not keen on seeing an end to the conflict, Sidiki Konaté, the Spoke's person for the *forces nouvelles* rejected such claims but went further to respond that in any situation, whether at peace or war, someone always benefits.

the rest of the government held zone.

4. Pre-electoral Violence and Unknown Triggers

Given the tense political terrain, the likelihood of violence in Cote d'Ivoire remains high. The apparent politics of hatred and bitterness coupled with other local and national factors of discord that often are exploited by politicians may constitute a serious intervening factor that may precipitate an outbreak of violence and hostilities.

4. Possible Scenarios

The aftermath of resolution 1721 has deepened the political divide in Cote d'Ivoire but within the next few months until a review in February 2007 of the implementation of the resolution, we envisage the following scenarios.

4.1. Good case Scenario

President Laurent Gbagbo and Prime Minister Charles Konan Banny continue to engage one another on the vision for peace in Cote d'Ivoire rather than focus on who is in control and the sterile debate over the supremacy of the constitution versus the interpretation of resolution 1721. The political divide narrows and a favourable context created for successful DDR and identification processes paving the way for a favourable socio-political atmosphere for electioneering. The country reunites as the civil administration and public service are restored all over the national territory. At same time, confidence building measures and a foundation for a vigorous policy towards national reconciliation is laid.

4.2. Bad case scenario

The rift between President Gbagbo and Prime Minister Banny widens. The anti-Gbagbo demonstrations turn violent and the UN forces and offices become targets of the no nonsense patriotic youth who feel more and more threatened that the international community is using the Prime Minister to take away the powers of Gbagbo and humiliate the Head of State. The Prime Minister is unable to implement outstanding agreements in the peace accords as resolution 1721 becomes totally ineffective. The violence escalates into the communities and settler populations become victims of the stalemate and the Prime Minister tenders his resignation. The FPI Government orders the UN to quit. Tension continues to mount and a large-scale confrontation or war erupts.

5. Options for Response and Action

WANEP proposes the following recommends or options for response:

5.1. New Fronts for Mediation

Resolutions alone would not resolve the protracted crisis in Cote d'Ivoire. Many shadow areas in the conflict have been left unattended. One of such gaps can be filled through new fronts of mediation if genuine and lasting peace is the goal of all. Due to the economic weight of Cote d'Ivoire (which ironically has remained relatively strong despite the war) the CFA Franc has suffered tremendously and may even result in devaluation if the crisis is not resolved soon. We propose the following mediation fronts:

- *Gbagbo and Banny*: Within the framework of ECOWAS, there should be an intensification of shuttle mediation between the President and Prime Minister. The

good offices of the Executive Secretariat of ECOWAS¹¹ with the participation of the Council of Elders should compliment the efforts of the Chairman of the African Union, President Dennis Sasou Nguesso and impress upon the President and the Prime Minister to break the stalemate.

- ❑ *Inclusive dialogue with political, traditional and social actors:* All the political leaders should be included in these talks aimed at forging a minimum consensus before and after the review of resolution 1721 by the UN Security Council in February 2007. More important, traditional chiefs, the civil society, social actors and community leaders must not only be fed with what politicians want. They must be actively involved and even lead some or most of the processes.
- ❑ *Dialogue with neighbours:* President Gbagbo has consistently accused Mali and Burkina Faso (rightly or wrongly) for aiding the rebellion in Cote d'Ivoire. Sustained and sincere dialogue between President Gbagbo and his neighbouring colleagues in Burkina Faso and Mali would go a long way to restoring fraternal relations between the brotherly countries who are condemned to live together, sharing common cultural and ethnic affinities.
- ❑ *Gbagbo and France:* There would be no genuine peace if cordial relations between France and Cote d'Ivoire are not restored. The French connection in the conflict has been ignored. One of the key to unravelling the knots that have sealed the fate of the process lies in understanding the "spirit and letter" of the Linas-Marcoussis agreement; how and why the process left Lomé for France. No one should be deceived that sustainable peace would be achieved if relations between the former colonial power and the nationalist inclined Gbagbo led government remain as tense.
- ❑ *Avoid mediators without democratic credentials:* You cannot give someone what you do not have. Mediators with poor and doubtful democratic credentials have no moral qualms to lead the peace process in Cote d'Ivoire, particularly those who ascended to power through *coup d'etats* and rigged elections.

5.2. Track Two Diplomacy

- ❑ *Mobilizing civil society:* Envisioning workshops with key civil society leaders across the political divide to enable them see their roles in being constructive towards building peace. The envisioning workshops should aim to unite Civil Society on the desired future for change rather than the current polarisation on issues that are paralyzing the country. WANEP can lead this process.
- ❑ *Community based processes:* Intermittent violent eruptions in communities on ethnic and political lines of divide call for community based responses. Community based development issues; peace processes and reconciliation must be supported. Huge resources spent on DDR and 'compensation' of fighters and the detriment of law-abiding citizens and victims send wrong signals.
- ❑ *Traditional Chiefs and Religious leaders:* Traditional Chiefs and Religious leaders are disenchanted that the international community has ignored them and every decision gives the impression that Cote d'Ivoire belongs to rebels, politicians and so-called patriots of all fronts. The future of Cote d'Ivoire must not be allowed to be decided by violent men in a country that had survived on traditional and religious values for decades.
- ❑ *Football Mediators:* Cote d'Ivoire rising stars in European soccer are like Kolo Touré, Didier Drogba, Aroua Koné (to name but a few) should be mobilized to unite the country. The one thing that united the country during these trying moments has been football. Given the unity in diversity demonstrated by the 'Elephants', the 'boys' can

¹¹ To be referred to as Presidency of the ECOWAS Commission beginning January 2007.

be mobilized to bring lasting peace to the country.

5.3. UN and International Community

- *Guard against discordant voices:* Differences and varied interests amongst the influential international community are detrimental to the peace process. There is need for unity of voice and purpose.
- *Peace my way:* The prejudices and perceptions that this and that are the villains and good guys are responsible for the protracted conflict in Cote d'Ivoire. Peace must go beyond personalities and address the issues that concern the majority of citizens. Focus should be on outstanding issues of disarmament and elections.
- *Reviewing the whole process:* As the United States contemplates reviewing its Iraqi failed mission; there is no reason why the ONOCI should not also objectively review its own strategy in Cote d'Ivoire. A confrontational approach must be avoided because it would benefit other interests except the ordinary Ivorian citizens who have been hijacked by politicians whose mind is to maintain power or ascend to it at all cost.

6. Conclusion

The successful elections in Democratic Republic of Congo provide a glimpse of hope for democracy in countries emerging from conflict. The road to that election was not without obstacles. Despite the challenges, the international community stayed focused. Peace in Cote d'Ivoire may cease to be an illusion. The lessons learned from past failures may help right the wrongs. It is important to note that major milestones have been accomplished in the Ivorian peace process. What is needed is to stay focused but resolute and strong so that political egos may not derail the process. The incapacity of the political stakeholders to work together has created a crisis of the elite that has deepened the polarisation within the populace. There are political actors who stand to lose if free and fair elections are conducted. Commitment to free and fair elections may not be to their advantage. Those who are applauding the confrontational stance between President Gbagbo and Prime Minister Banny do not have the interest of Cote d'Ivoire as priority. As Cote d'Ivoire is united behind its national team at the World Cup in Germany, it is an opportunity for politicians to ensure the same fair play in politics, a level playing field, and even accepting defeat in honour and good spirit. The critical role of the rest of the international community led by France cannot be over-emphasized. Nevertheless, Prime Minister Banny remains the best intermediary who can ensure unity of government and purpose since he is not a candidate for the presidency. Any further damage to his standing as a result of the different perspectives or disagreements around resolution 1721 will compromise his capacity to ensure the implementation of the road map to peace. What remains a certainty is that the President needs the Prime Minister to continue as the arbiter and unifier of political stakeholders while the Prime Minister also needs the support and backing of the President to implement the peace accords.