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United States Embassy (Abidjan)

Côte d'Ivoire: American Embassy's National Daily Press Review

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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.

The electoral process in Cote d'Ivoire was the major issue in today's Ivorian press, as the Independent Electoral Commission has decided to extend the voter registration exercise. The training of youth by the NGO, Search for Common Ground, was also reported on. The newspapers again talked about the meeting between the U.S. Ambassador to Cote d'Ivoire, Wanda L. Nesbitt, and the Ivorian Minister Reconstruction and Integration. The first official visit of President John Atta Mills of Ghana to Cote d'Ivoire; and the congress of the National Union of Journalists of Cote d'Ivoire (UNJCI) were the other major news.

1. "Identification: The Last Round," said a banner headline in *Fraternite Matin* (a state-owned daily). The paper quoted the Chairman of the Independent Electoral Commission, Robert Beugre Mambe, announcing on Thursday that the body will launch the final round of the voter registration and population identification programs on April 15, 2009. The exercise will cover the whole country and will end on April 30, said the report. The paper further quoted the electoral commissioner, who explained that the extension of the enrolment exercise has become necessary because more than 298 registration centers are yet to be covered and other centers that were not fully covered during the previous exercise will be taken into account. This last round of voter registration will also allow potential voters, who have just acquired their identity documents during the program to reestablish birth and death registers, to get registered, Mr. Mambe reportedly said. The commissioner also argued that "The international community would have to certify the electoral process. There are about ten or twenty villages where the registration exercise did not take place; and the voters' roll will not be certified and this will block the process."
2. The United Nations Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI) announced that as of March 30, about six million potential voters have been registered, according to *Fraternite Matin*. The report said this figure was announced yesterday by the spokesperson of the UNOCI, Hamadoun Toure, who called upon Ivorian political stakeholders "to pursue efforts in order to cover the 298 out of the 11,020 centers." Regarding the reestablishment of birth and death registers that were destroyed during the crisis, Mr. Toure announced that UNOCI has been informed that so far 40,400 applications have been accepted out of 104,182 that have been registered.
3. In a bid to ensure a violence-free election in Cote d'Ivoire, the NGO, Search for Common Ground, trained 60 youth leaders from different political parties and organizations in Yamoussoukro, the country's political capital, said another report in *Fraternite Matin*. The program focused on the responsibility of youths in the electoral process and obstacles that could force potential voters to stay away from the election.
4. Meanwhile, a front-page story in *L'inter* (a privately-owned daily) said that commanders of the Ivorian national army and the New Forces Armed Forces disagree over the composition of the Integrated Center for Command (CCI) - a joint security unit - that should be deployed in the central, western, and northern regions of the country under the Ouagadougou Political Agreement.
5. A front-page story in *Le Patriote* (a daily close to the opposition RDR party) announced that President Blaise Compaore is expected in Yamoussoukro on April 11, 2009 to attend a meeting of the CPC - a committee overseeing the implementation of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement. Facilitator in the Ivorian crisis, the Burkinabe president and Ivorian political stakeholders will evaluate the peace process in an attempt to find ways to advance the process.
6. *Le Temps* (a daily close to ruling FPI party) reported on a recent meeting between the U.S. Ambassador to Cote d'Ivoire, Wanda L. Nesbitt and Minister of reconstruction and reintegration, Mrs. Hamza Bamba over the government's reconstruction and reintegration program. According to the report, Ambassador Nesbitt promised to support this program.
7. On sub regional relationship, *Notre Voie* (a daily close to ruling FPI party) published a statement issued by the Presidency announcing a two-day friendly visit of President John Atta Mills of Ghana to Cote d'Ivoire. According to the statement, the Ghanaian leader is expected in Yamoussoukro on April 7-8, 2009.
8. Finally, a report in *Fraternite Matin* said that about 500 Ivorian journalists are due to attend the 7th congress of the National Union of Journalists of Cote d'Ivoire (UNJCI) on Saturday and Sunday in Abidjan. The congress will see the election of a new president of the association. The congress has been delayed for several times over who is qualified to contest this position. The competition will finally oppose Mr. Criwa Zeli, a journalist with *L'inter* and Mr. Inza Kigbafori of *Le Patriote*.

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