ANTI-CORRUPTION HELPDESK

PROVIDING ON-DEMAND RESEARCH TO HELP FIGHT CORRUPTION

OVERVIEW OF CORRUPTION AND ANTI-CORRUPTION IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE

QUERY

Could you please provide an overview of corruption and anti-corruption in Côte d'Ivoire, including actions taken to tackle petty bribery, grand corruption and money laundering, and the stakeholders involved in the fight against corruption?

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REMARK

This is an update of a country profile compiled in 2013 that can be found here.

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SUMMARY

Côte d'Ivoire is recovering from more than a decade of ethnic and political turmoil that plunged the country into civil war and post-electoral violence in 2010 and undermined the rule of law and effectiveness of governance institutions. Against this backdrop, corruption remains endemic, systemic, permeating all levels of society. Corruption in the judiciary, police and security forces is an area of particular concern, fuelling a climate of impunity for corruption.

President Ouattara has placed anti-corruption on his political agenda in recent years and taken a number of steps to address the country's major governance challenges. In particular, a presidential anti-corruption decree was passed in 2013, and new anti-corruption bodies – such as the as the Brigade for the Fight Against Corruption in 2012, the High Authority for Good Governance in 2014 and the Anti-Racketeering Unit – were established to fight corruption at checkpoints. While it is too early to assess the effectiveness of these measures to address corruption, most governance indicators point to progress made in recent years to control corruption.

1 OVERVIEW OF CORRUPTION CHALLENGES IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Background

In the post-independence decades, Côte d'Ivoire enjoyed a period of relative economic and political stability under the authoritarian rule of President Félix Houphouët-Boigny, until his death in 1993 when political instability emerged over his succession. Unlike Houphouët-Boigny, who avoided any ethnic conflict, his successor, Bédié emphasised the concept of "Ivority" (*Ivorité*) to exclude his main rival, Alassane Ouattara and his northern supporters, from running for future presidential elections. This created tensions in the country, excluded many people from Ivoirian nationality and degraded the relationship between various ethnic groups in the country, fuelling unrest and insecurity. Following a bloodless coup that overthrew Bédié in 1999, Laurent Gbagbo assumed power after Alassane Ouattara was disqualified by the country's supreme court due to his alleged Burkinabé nationality. Tensions persisted and culminated in the 2002 coup and plunged the country into civil war between northern-controlled rebels and the government-controlled south, effectively splitting it in in two.

Although most of the fighting ended in 2004, the country was put under an arms embargo and placed under the supervision of a UN peacekeeping mission while the country remained tense and divided. A peace agreement with a power-sharing government including Gbagbo was finally brokered by Burkina Faso politician Blaise Compaoré in 2007, reuniting the country under Gbagbo as president and rebel leader, Guillaume Soro as prime minister (Bertelsmann Foundation 2016).

Elections aimed at ending the conflict were repeatedly postponed and finally held in October 2010. But the vote reignited the conflict when Laurent Gbagbo refused to concede victory to the internationally recognised Alassane Ouattara's elected government who had to be protected by UN peacekeepers. The conflict resulted in thousands of deaths and a million displaced people within a couple of months. Ouattara finally assumed power in 2011 after his forces overran the south of the country and deposed Gbagbo, who was transferred to The

Hague's International Criminal Court to stand trial on charges of crimes against humanity (BBC 2016).

While Alassane Ouatarra was peacefully re-elected for a five-year mandate in October 2015, democratic institutions remain fragile, following a long tradition of complete presidential control over the political process. Like his predecessors, Ouattara maintains a firm grip over political power, with decision making concentrated within the hands of a narrow group of close and elderly statesmen (Bertelsmann Foundation 2016).

Despite the unstable environment, Côte d'Ivoire remains one of the world's largest producers and exporters of cocoa beans, coffee and palm oil. It enjoys relatively strong economic performances, partly due to Ouattara's reforms in public administration and key economic sectors as well as investments in health, education and infrastructure (Bertelsmann Foundation 2016), with robust two-year growth in 2014 at an estimated 8.3 per cent, with similar expansion expected in 2015 and 2016 (Africa Economic Outlook 2016). It is one of the largest economies of the Economic Community of West Africa States and represents close to 40 per cent of the GDP of the West African Economic and Monetary Union's (WAEMU) (UK Government 2016). Despite its situation as a regional economic force, the country ranks out 172 of 188 on the Human Development Index, indicating low levels of human development (UNDP 2015).

Côte d'Ivoire's economy relies heavily on agriculture and related activities which engage two-thirds of the population. Côte d'Ivoire also produces oil and gas, diamonds, gold and manganese ore. Mining activities and oil and gas production are expected to increase as part of a long-term strategy to reduce the country's dependence on a single commodity, cocoa, which in 2012 accounted for 28.5 per cent of total exports (EITI website).

Extent and forms of corruption

Extent of corruption

Against this background, fuelled by political turmoil, instability and weak governance structures, corruption is perceived as widespread, permeating all sectors of society. Most sources point to endemic

corruption as a serious impediment to investment and economic growth in the country (US Department of State 2015). Transparency International's 2015 Corruption Perception Index ranks the country 107 out of 168, with a score of 32 on a 0 to 100 scale, indicating systemic corruption.

In the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness report 2016-2015, Côte d'Ivoire scores 3.8 in terms of ethics and corruption on a 1 (worst) to 7 (best) scale. The Heritage Foundation refers to corruption as a major area of concern, reporting that corruption remains widespread, with a score of 32 out of 100 in terms of freedom from corruption. The report further states that perpetrators are seldom prosecuted despite an official "zero tolerance" policy (Heritage Foundation 2016). In the 2009 World Bank's Enterprise survey, 75 per cent of the firms surveyed identified corruption as a major constraint to their operations (World Bank 2009)

Corruption remains endemic but there are indications of progress in recent years. Although the country performs poorly on most areas of governance assessed by the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators, the situation seems to have improved since 2009, except for political stability, with significant progress achieved in terms of rule of law (30.29 in 2014 compared to 7.11 in 2009 on a 0 to 100 scale), voice and accountability (32.02 compared to 15.17), regulatory quality (29.33 compared to 18.66), government effectiveness (21.15 compared to 11.48). The most significant progress has been achieved in terms of control of corruption, with the country improving its score from 12.44 in 2009 to 41.83 in 2014.

Forms of corruption

Petty and bureaucratic corruption

The civil war and division of the country have weakened Côte d'Ivoire's governance structures, resulting in the creation of two parallel structures and the de-facto partition of the country. The Bertelsmann Foundation points to substantial progress achieved in restoring state administration throughout the country in the post 2010-2011 crisis (Bertelsmann Foundation 2016).

However, petty bribery remains so deeply entrenched

in bureaucratic practice that it has become "normal" practice, undermining citizens' trust in the government and its ability to govern effectively (Institute for National Security and Counterterrorism 2014). Red tape and lack of resources and capacity combined with low salaries contribute to create fertile grounds for facilitation payments (Freedom House 2012; Gnomblerou 2015). Against this background, public officials ask for bribes as a coping strategy to complement their income. In 2013, the minimum salary was set at US$104 as announced by the government, but this measure still needs to be enforced (Gnomblerou 2015).

While the country performs better than the regional average in the ease of doing business, more than 30 per cent of the firms surveyed in the World Bank's enterprise survey report being expected to give a gift to get an operating licence.

Obtaining formal documents, such as official stamps, birth certificates or an automobile title, are often subject to unofficial payments to public officials. Clearing goods at the ports often require the payment of substantial unofficial commissions, and containers can be held at the port of Abidjan for months because of corruption in customs. Many companies refer to corruption as a major constraint to doing business in the country (US Department of State 2015)

In the absence of effective auditing, there is a long tradition of mismanagement of public resources and financial malpractice in the country that has been sustained over time and in successive governments (Bertelsmann Foundation 2016). The global competitive report 2015-2016 points to diversion of public funds (3.5 on a 1 to 7 scale) as one of the major corruption-related challenges in the country, before the payment of bribes (4.2). Stricter controls in the last three years have uncovered a significant number of ghost employees on the payroll (Global Integrity 2015).

Grand and political corruption

There are also incidences of political and grand corruption cases reported by the media or civil society organisations, often involving high-level officials. Public procurement is especially vulnerable to such forms of corruption (see below). Only a few cases have been investigated and prosecuted in

recent years. Among the few cases that have been prosecuted, one case involves the mismanagement of public resources worth US$400,000 by four officials of the Ministry of Health and the director of a private company between 2009 and 2010. Another case involves the former barons of the coffee-cocoa sector, one of the biggest corruption scandals reported in the country (Gnomblerou 2015). Corruption is so ingrained in the country's public life that corrupt office holders are not confronted to major adverse publicity from the media or civil society. Corrupt officials rarely face exposure and enjoy impunity for their corrupt deeds (Bertelsmann Foundation 2016).

Between 2002 and 2011, the country was not an electoral democracy as governments were installed by successive coups or international brokered peace agreements. Competition for power and the lack of trust in electoral oversight bodies led to the violent aftermath of the 2010 elections (Freedom House 2012). While the law prohibits the formation of political parties along ethnic and religious lines, in practice, ethnicity remains a key factor in party membership and political affiliations generally follow geographic or ethnic lines, which contributed to exacerbate the conflict (US Department of State 2014). As already mentioned, the concept of "ethnicity" was used to exclude Ouattara from the political stage in the 2000s and was a major driver of the conflict. A new nationality law came into effect in 2014 allowing foreigners married to Ivoirians to acquire the Ivorian citizenship, but its effects remain to be seen (Freedom House 2015).

The reform of the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI), ahead of the 2015 presidential election, was a highly contentious process but was finally adopted in May 2014 after months of negotiations. Freedom House 2015's political rights rating for Côte d'Ivoire have improved following the October 2015 presidential election, which is considered the freest, fairest and most peaceful in the country's recent history (US Department of State 2014).

Many sources refer to a lack of accountability for serious crimes, including corruption, committed by President Ouattara's forces and former rebel commanders to whom Ouatarra is owed his victory in 2011 and that they continue to exert undue influence over policy decisions (Human Right Watch 2014;

Freedom House 2015). The public trust in politicians is assessed by the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness report at 3.7 on a 1 to 7 scale.

Nepotism and cronyism

Tribalism and political connections traditionally influence appointments, with the practice of reserving the best positions to family members or members of the same tribe (Gnomblerou 2015). Cronyism and nepotism continue to permeate the country's public life and politics, although President Ouattara made his ministers sign an anti-corruption oath to prevent such practices. Most of the government is composed by individuals from the north, and a number of Ouattara's family members hold strategic positions in the administration (Wickberg 2013). For example, his brother Téné Birahima Ouattara, nicknamed "Photocopy" for his resemblance to his older brother, is a minister in charge of presidential affairs (Birahima Téné Ouattara Blog). Global Integrity 2015 also confirms that appointments are not merit based, lack transparency and are made based on opaque criteria, such as political or family connections.

At another level, politicians tend to develop their region and provide preferential treatment to citizens from their region, fuelling nepotism and inequalities. This may also drive corruption as the culture of offering gifts to show gratefulness to someone for a favour is widespread (Gnomblerou 2015).

Money laundering

With the legacy of the civil war, money laundering remains a serious concern in Côte d'Ivoire. The laundering of the proceeds of crime has contributed to fuelling the conflict, financing and enriching rebel groups and political leaders. In fact, illicit trade in natural resources and arms gave public officials and rebel leaders incentives to impede the peace settlement (Freedom House 2012; Global Witness 2007).

The country is still characterised by weak controls, an important informal economy, the smuggling of consumer goods and agricultural products, participation in regional criminal activities, such as arms or human trafficking, and the subsequent laundering of their proceeds. In Côte d'Ivoire, trade

based money laundering is an important means to launder the proceeds of crime and is especially prevalent in the real estate, precious metals and jewellery, and agricultural sectors. Smuggling over the country's permeable borders generates illicit flows that are laundered via cash smuggling and informal value transfer systems, such as exchange houses or mobile telephone transfers. In addition, the formal banking systems, financial institutions as well as the used car and real estate industries are also used to launder funds (GIABA 2013; US Department of State 2014 b).

Sectors especially vulnerable to corruption

The judiciary, customs authorities, tax administration and the security forces are sectors most affected by corruption in Côte d'Ivoire (US Department of State 2014).

Police and security forces

TPolice, with assistance from a special mixed unit of police, gendarmerie, and the Republican Forces of Côte d'Ivoire (FRCI), and the Directorate for Territorial Surveillance (DST) are responsible for law enforcement. The police are considered ineffective, lacking sufficient equipment and training. As a result, the FRCI tend to perform many police and security functions. However, the FRCI forces also lack basic training and had an inadequate command and control structure (US Department of State 2015).

Impunity and corruption are endemic in the sector. In particular, security checkpoints are used by the police to extort bribes. The problem was so widespread that a police anti-racketeering unit was created to fight extortion at checkpoints. While extortion has decreased in Abidjan and the main roads used by expatriates, the practice remains widespread on secondary routes (Human Right Watch 2014).

Observers also report that, since Ouattara assumed power, security forces loyal to him are involved in corrupt plundering schemes, such as smuggling and operating parallel tax systems on cocoa, timber, diamonds and other natural resources. Commanders are believed to use such illicit income sources for both personal enrichment and as a tool for retaining

ex-combatant loyalty (Human Right Watch 2015).

Transparency International UK's Government Defence Anti-Corruption Index places Côte d'Ivoire in the group of countries presenting a very high risk for corruption in the defence and security sector, facing major challenges in operational and financial aspects, followed by procurement, political and personnel aspects (Transparency International UK 2015). Corruption vulnerabilities include lack of budget transparency, absence of auditing, opaque procurement, illicit financial interests of cocoa and diamond industries (Transparency International 2012)

Faced with such challenges, there is a general perception that the government is unwilling to prosecute its supporters for crimes committed during the post 2010 elections and subsequent illicit activities, fuelling a culture of impunity among the security forces (Bertelsmann Foundation 2016; US Department of State 2015).

The military police and military tribunal are responsible for investigating and prosecuting abuses perpetrated by the security services, but there have been very few high-profile convictions reported for offences committed during or after the post-election crisis. Many cases result in internal sanctions or do not proceed beyond the investigation phase (US Department of State 2015).

Procurement

Another major area of concern for corruption is public procurement. Public procurement in Côte d'Ivoire lacks transparency and is suspected of being affected by bid-rigging and favouritism while contracts are not awarded based on transparent criteria. For example, the government was criticised in 2013 for awarding a high-profile bid to build a container terminal at the port of Abidjan to a French firm although allegedly a Swiss company had presented a lower bid (US Department of State 2015). Companies also complain that the government selects companies it has proactively approached instead of through a competitive process. Companies also report widespread favouritism and diversion of public resources (World Economic Forum 2016).

Bribery is also widespread. The World Bank

Enterprise Survey indicates that more than 30 per cent of the firms surveyed reported being expected to give a gift to secure a government contract of 3.2 per cent of the contract value.

Procurement rules and regulations are often broken. It is estimated that in 2013, 80 per cent of public procurements were awarded without competitive bidding, compared to 40 per cent in 2012. The government justified sole-source procurement for the purpose of rapid development. A subsequent audit report found that while contracts were executed satisfactorily at costs comparable to similar contracts, in 95 per cent of the cases sole-source contracting was not justified (Freedom House 2015).

The Autorité Nationale de Régulation des Marchés Publics (ANRMP) is the national public procurement agency regulating public procurement. A community framework for public procurement was adopted in 2009 to harmonise public procurement policy and comply with the WAEMU directives on bidding processes and auditing. A centralised office for public bids was also created in the Ministry of Finance to ensure that public procurement in Côte d'Ivoire complies with international bidding practices. However, in spite of these steps, procurement in Côte d'Ivoire continues to be a sensitive area of operation in terms of control of corruption (US Department of State 2015).

Natural resources

The natural resources sector is also vulnerable, affected by the legacy of war, as resources have been widely used by the belligerents to fuel the economy of war (Global Witness 2007).

Land and agriculture

The cocoa sector, in particular, has been misused during the conflict for purchasing arms and enriching the belligerents, as documented by a 2007 Global Witness's report covering how revenues from the cocoa trade have contributed to funding the armed conflict and provided opportunities for enrichment from cocoa through corruption and misuse of revenues, both by the government and the rebel group Forces Nouvelles, impeding the resolution of the crisis. Successive presidents have placed their allies in strategic positions, kept the industry's

structure intentionally complex and opaque. and there is a general lack of political will to bring more transparency and accountability to the sector, offering government opportunities for abuse and misuse of natural resources (Global Witness 2007). There is little research to indicate how the situation has evolved since the publication of the report.

Until recently, few cases of abuse of natural resources had been exposed and prosecuted. Former cocoa sector officials were convicted of embezzling millions between 2002 and 2008, but the role of high-level officials also believed to have been involved in the scheme is still to be investigated (Human Right Watch 2014).

There have been some regulatory reforms undertaken in the cocoa, coffee, cotton and cashew sectors but the institutions tasked with monitoring, controlling and regulating these sectors were neither efficient nor transparent and suspected of mismanagement. In 2011, a new regulatory and legal framework was finally adopted, and a single regulatory and oversight body, the Cocoa and Coffee Council as well as a Cotton and Cashew Council were created. In spite of these steps, cocoa companies continue to complain about the lack of transparency of the sector (US Department of State 2015).

Extractive industries

Diamonds have been another important source of income for the various armed groups and were illegally exploited and smuggled after the UN Security Council included a ban on diamond export in the arms embargo in 2005 (Wickberg 2013).

Although the country started to exploit its mineral resources, Côte d'Ivoire is a significant regional player in the oil industry and expected to develop oil and gas exploration and production. The state supervises and participates in the oil industry through the state-owned company Petroci and its partly privately owned subsidiaries. Until recently, the sector was considered extremely opaque, with a lack of political will by the government, state-owned enterprises and businesses to disclose information about reserves, production and income (Wickberg 2013).

However, the government has taken important steps

to regulate the sector with a new code on mining which has been a key factor for the country to accede to both the Kimberley Process and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). The diamond embargo was consequently lifted by the UN in 2014, and the country started to export Kimberley certified diamonds in March 2015 (US Department of State 2015). Côte d'Ivoire also became a compliant EITI country in 2013, producing EITI reports that disclose revenues, taxes and other payments paid by companies, and the government discloses what it has received, reconciling these two sets of figures (EITI website).

2 ANTI-CORRUPTION EFFORTS IN COTE D'IVOIRE

Overview of efforts

The Ouattara administration has spoken out publicly on corruption and taken a number of steps to fight it that observers assess as moderate so far (Gnomblerou 2015). In 2010, the government issued a decree to strengthen the capacities of the National Secretariat for Good Governance and Capacity Building to promote good governance and allocate resources to fight corruption.

A "National Plan on Good Governance and the Fight Against Corruption" was launched in 2013, and a number of new institutions have been established such as the Brigade for the Fight Against Corruption in 2012, the High Authority for Good Governance in 2014 or the Anti-Racketeering Unit to fight corruption at checkpoints (see below), but it is still too early to assess the effectiveness of such approaches (Bertelsmann Foundation 2014).

Reporting mechanisms have been established to allow citizens to report corruption, including complaints of racketeering by the police. The government also established specialised units within the judiciary, and judges were appointed in 2015 to handle corruption cases (Bertelsmann Foundation 2016).

Besides aiming at strengthening the institutional framework against corruption, the government is taking steps to improve disclosure of information, with provision of information on the structure and functioning of the institutional framework and publication of a brief overview of public finance reports, but the information remains basic (Gnomblerou 2015).

In June 2013, the government's National Committee for the Millennium Challenge Corporation and the *Secretariat National à la Gouvernance et au Renforcement des Capacités* launched an awareness raising intervention to fight corruption through a billboard and television campaign. In September 2013, a presidential decree, developed with the support of UNDP, the ordinance 2013-660 was passed, covering prevention and repression of corruption for both public and private officials. It was ratified by parliament in 2014.

According to some observers, it is still unclear whether these measures are truly an indication of a firm political will to address corruption challenges and are unlikely to yield the expected results, arguing that the country has a track record of creating new laws and institutions which do not translate into effective action and implementation (Gnomblerou 2015).

Legal framework

International commitments

Côte d'Ivoire ratified the United National Convention against Corruption and the Africa Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption in 2012 as well as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime and its protocol on human trafficking.

National legislation

The Ivoirian penal code criminalises passive and active bribery of public officials, including the act of offering, giving and promising a bribe, and the act of soliciting, asking for, agreeing to and accepting a bribe. Ordinance 2013-660 relating to the fight against corruption specifically defines foreign bribery contrary to the penal code and enumerates a number of corrupt practices in the public administration, including abuse of function, undue influence, embezzlement, illegal gratuity and corruption of foreign officials. The ordinance also includes

corruption practices in the private sector and forbids government employees to benefit directly or indirectly from private or state-owned companies related to contracts, markets or financial payment they are in charge of.

The ordinance provides for whistleblowing protection, including for members of the High Authority for Good Governance, however, the scope and conditions of the protection remains unprecise (Global Integrity 2015).

The constitution refers to the right of citizens to access information, and an access to information law was passed in 2014, with a new commission to monitor the implementation of the law (Human Right Watch 2014; Global Integrity 2015). Data relating to government activities is widely available but varies across institutions (US Department of State 2014).

In terms of prevention measures, the president and certain high officials, including presidents of government institutions, ministers and secretary of states and elected officials, are required by law to declare their assets, but these declarations are not made publicly accessible. In practice, the asset declaration regime is not considered effective in the country (Global Integrity 2015). According to the High Authority for Good Governance's 2015 annual report, more than 50 per cent of officials required to declare their assets did so, but it is not clear how the information is being treated by the institution. The ordinance introduces some provisions for regulating conflicts of interest and provides for sanctions for not declaring where the private interests of a public official may influence the exercise of his/her functions. The ordinance calls for public institutions to define rules and codes of conduct for public officials.

The Ivorian government is perceived to be committed to build an effective anti-money laundering regime (US State Department 2014b). The 2005 anti-money laundering law also criminalises money laundering and makes provision for due diligence, know-your-customer rules, and so on. Ivorian legislation goes beyond Financial Action Task Force recommendations to include 20 serious predicate offences by defining as predicate offence all criminal activities (GIABA 2013). The country is a member of the *Groupe Intergouvernemental d'Action contre le Blanchiment d'Argent en Afrique*

de l'Ouest (GIABA).

Institutional framework

Judiciary

The judiciary is also referred to as a major area of concern in terms of corruption in the country. During the post-electoral crisis, it did not function at all, and judicial decisions were subject to corruption and bribery (Wickberg 2013). All 40 of the country's courts became fully functional in 2014 (Freedom House 2015). However, the judiciary lacks independence and is vulnerable to executive interventions, both in its decisions and doctrines (Bertelsmann Foundation 2016; Freedom House 2015). The lack of independence of the judiciary is reflected in the treatment of war crimes, with the procedures initiated in many cases against pro-Gbagbo forces, while there is a notable lack of action against pro-Ouattara supporters (Bertelsmann Foundation 2016). This is also true for corruption-related offences as no legal action has been against former rebel leaders who accumulated wealth during the occupation of the north (Bertelsmann Foundation 2016). The authorities continue to delay bringing to trial hundreds of Gbagbo supporters accused of war crimes, some of whom have been detained since 2012 (Freedom House 2015). This situation is likely to fuel impunity for other types of crime and abuses, including corruption.

The judiciary also faces major challenges of resources and capacity and is riddled by corruption. It is subject to interference and favouritism based on family and ethnic ties (Human Right Watch 2014).

Inspector General of Finance's Brigade de Lutte contre la Corruption (BLC)

The BLC was established under the Ministry of Finance in 2012 to combat corruption. It was designed to be equipped with the instruments to effectively prevent and deter corruption through complaints handling, investigations and controls over financial resources managed by the ministry. As such, the BLC may lack independence from the government, although it is perceived as enforcing the strong commitment of the government to fight corruption and promote transparency (Gnomblerou

2015).

High Authority for Good Governance (HABG)

The HABG was established in 2013 but only became fully functional in 2014. It is in charge of leading actions to prevent and repress corruption-related offences. More specifically, the HABG is in charge of conducting investigations into corrupt practices, identifying alleged culprits and their accomplices, to receive and handle corruption complaints, as well as control and audit reports and refer cases to the public prosecutor (Global Integrity 2015).

Before this creation, other institutions such as the National Secretariat for Good Governance and Capacity Building had a broader mandate, making it the first body with the specific mandate of preventing and combating corruption. According to experts consulted within the framework of this query, it is still too early to assess the independence and effectiveness of this body and whether it will be granted sufficient resources and autonomy to operate effectively.

While it is too early to assess the work of the HABG, at its creation some observers already questioned the ability of the institution to effectively address the major corruption challenges facing the country in view of its resources (Freedom House 2015). In 2015, the HABG received 63 reports of corruption, which are currently being handled. Among those, six have been referred to the prosecutor general for further investigation (Tano 2016).

Financial Intelligence Unit (Cellule Nationale de Traitement des Informations Financières de Côte d'Ivoire) (CENTI-CI)

CENTIF-CI was created under the Ministry of Finance in 2006 and became functional in March 2008. It is responsible for investigating money laundering and terrorist financing. It has a broad authority to investigate suspicious financial transactions, including those of government officials. It was admitted into the Egmont Group in July 2010. It is formally independent and financially autonomous.

Efforts to fight money laundering include the enforcement of anti-money laundering legislation, capacity building of financial institutions, insurance companies and non-financial institutions such as notaries and lawyers, and has regional and international cooperation. Côte d'Ivoire leads the network of Financial Intelligence Units (FIU) within the West African Economic and Monetary Union.

Police Anti-Racketeering Unit (Unité de lutte Contre le Racket)

In 2011, the government authorised only 33 checkpoints throughout the country as part of its anti-racketeering campaign, but many illegal checkpoints remain visible in the interior of the country. The Anti-Racketeering Unit was set up in 2012 to fight extortion by the police at checkpoints. However, the unit is insufficiently funded and has made little progress in effectively addressing racketeering by security forces (US Department of State 2015). Officials and their superiors are often also involved in the scheme themselves and fail to report violations. The military tribunal is not perceived as very effective in adjudicating cases brought by the anti-racketeering unit (Human Right Watch 2015).

General secretariat in charge of good governance and capacity building (SNGRC)

The SNGRC was created in 2002 and modified in 2010 to promote good governance in Côte d'Ivoire. It was placed under the prime minster with the mandate to elaborate and implement government policy in good governance. Besides nationally-conducted research, the SNGRC advocated the passage of a new anti-corruption law and the establishment of an anti-corruption commission (Wickberg 2013). In September 2014, when the HABG was created, the SNGRC became the National Secretariat for Capacity Building (Gnomblerou 2015). Following the creation of the HABG, the mandate of the SNGRC has been focussed on capacity building and the institution is no longer directly involved in the fight against corruption

Supreme Audit Institution

The control over government financial oversight and the role of state auditor is divided between the *Cour des Comptes* (Court of Auditors) and the *Inspecteur*

General des Finances (Inspector General of Finance)*. The Court of Auditors is in charge of controlling public spending of the central government, local governments as well as public entities and state-owned enterprises, among others. The Inspector General of Finance is under the authority of the Ministry of Economy and Finance and Is Responsible for Overseeing the Utilisation of public funds and to prevent frauds, abuses and corruption.

Experts question Côte d'Ivoire's internal auditing structure and capacity to oversee the entirety of public financial management due to a lack of resources (Wickberg 2013).

Office of the Ombudsman

Côte d'Ivoire's *Mediateur de la Republique* acts as the country's ombudsman. It was created in 2000 as an independent entity in charge of mitigating conflicts between the administration and citizens. The ombudsman is nominated by the president of the republic on a recommendation from the president of the parliament and can be revoked, in case of impediment, by the constitutional court seized by the president of the republic, which could potentially represent a challenge to the independence of this institution (Wickberg 2013). The website of the *Médiateur de la République* can be accessed here.

Other stakeholders

Civil society

Freedom of association and assembly is guaranteed by law. Although the right of association can be denied in practice, especially for political organisations and parties, civil society organisations tend to operate freely in the country (Freedom House 2015).

Over the last four years, the debate surrounding the reform of the anti-corruption legal and institutional framework led to the emergence of civil society networks focussed on promoting transparency and accountability, with a few still limited initiatives. There is no strong tradition of citizen participation, and it has been further weakened by the political polarisation, the territorial divisions, and ethnic and political tensions (Bertelsmann Foundation 2016).

The last decade of conflict, lack of rule of law and the militarisation of public life have taken their toll on activism. Peaceful processes often risk escalating into violence and confrontations between demonstrators and the police (Freedom House 2015).

Groups wishing to hold a demonstration in an enclosed space are required to submit a written notice to the Ministry of Interior three days before the proposed event. In practice, however, the executive keeps a strong grip over the political process. Civil society actors also became more involved in the political process recently, especially with regard to the electoral process. However, the current government does not proactively involve civil society actors (Bertelsmann Foundation 2016).

Parliamentarians

The National Assembly is the only chamber of parliament. The current legislature was incorporated in 2012 and is the first established after the decade of crisis in the country. Compared to the previous term and due to a renewal rate of almost 90%, the Ivorian National Assembly is composed of members of which the majority has never exercised parliamentary mandate. The opposition is also absent from this parliament because it did not participate in the last elections.

The Ivorian parliament in this context could not play a major role in the fight against corruption. However, with UNDP support since 2014, some members have established a national section of African Parliamentarians Network Against Corruption (APNAC) and try to include anti-corruption in the institution's agenda.

Media

Freedom of speech and of the press are protected by the constitution. The *Conseil National de la Presse* (CNP) enforces regulations, including provisions prohibiting speech inducing violence, hatred and rebellion (Freedom House 2015). Journalists and media outlets often face sanctions and suspension, which may discourage independent or critical reporting. There is a strong sense of self-censorship in the country where civil society is reluctant to speak up (Wickberg 2013; Freedom House 2015).

However, Reporters Without Borders rank Côte d'Ivoire 80th out of 180 on its Press Freedom Index

2015, which represents an improvement from 2013 where it ranked 96 and from 2012 where the country ranked 159.

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