

# INDICATOR INSIGHT BRIEF:

## GABON 'NATIONAL DIALOGUE'

**05/04/2024**

### Indicator

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April 2024, the 'transitional' military government opened the 'National Dialogue'. This began with a gathering of approximately 600 delegates in Libreville and was chaired by the Archbishop of Libreville. The stated aim is to review a draft constitution, determine the duration of the transition from military to civilian government, and discuss the "political, economic, and social organisation" of Gabon. Following the opening ceremony, the Dialogue was postponed until the 6<sup>th</sup> of April pending the training of committee chairs. The event is scheduled to last until the 30<sup>th</sup> of April.

### Context

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of August 2023, it was announced that President Ali Bongo had been 're-elected' for a third term. He had taken over from his father, who had led Gabon since 1963. Several opposition parties accused Ali Bongo's government of election irregularities and the embezzlement of public funds; and mass protests broke out. A military coup d'état was subsequently led by General Brice Oligui Nguema, who was declared the 'interim' President. The General is a cousin of Ali Bongo and Commander-in-Chief of the Republican Guard. The 'transitional' government has indicated a 'transition' timeframe, with a constitutional referendum scheduled for November/December 2024 and national elections scheduled for August 2025.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of August 2023, the military stopped all movements into and out of Gabon. These resumed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September 2023. Owendo and Port Gentil were disrupted by this, and by a curfew imposed by the military. The Gabonese offshore oil terminals remained operational.

### Analysis

The 'National Dialogue' is likely to favour continuity. More than 300 delegates are drawn from governmental institutions or hold military positions. There are also 104 representatives from all political parties on a one-member-per-party basis, not proportionate to their public support. The remaining delegates were appointed by the 'interim' President from civil society groups. Though there has been some criticism of the composition of the Dialogue, it is assessed unlikely that the Dialogue itself will trigger disruptive protests. In response to the coup d'état, several international organisations applied political sanctions and suspended non-humanitarian assistance. The scheduling of a transition has alleviated some international pressure on the government. In March 2024 the Economic Community of Central African States lifted its sanctions.

### Implications

Though there has been international criticism of the 'National Dialogue' and the postponement of the committee stages, there is likely to be no significant disruption to shipping. The composition of the delegation has not triggered significant protests. Unless the transition to civilian government is postponed further, the results of the 'National Dialogue', scheduled for the end of April, are also unlikely to generate significant popular protests. It is expected that the 'interim' President will be permitted to run for election. Others holding office have been excluded. It is more likely that any disruption in the near-term would come from other members of the military. As with the coup d'état in August, the greatest disruption to shipping arose from the seizure of power and subsequent closure of movements into and out of Gabon. These measures may also be applied temporarily during a voting period, but this is not expected for some months.