

Ivorian dailies echo Soro, Gbagbo's New Year speeches

Abidjan- Cote d'Ivoire (PANA) -- Newspapers in Abidjan lengthily commented on parallel addresses delivered on New Year's Eve by Ivorian President Laurent Gbagbo, and Secretary General Guillaume Soro of Cote d'Ivoire's Patriotic Movement (MPCI), the rebellion's political wing.

Under the title "Gbagbo negates the profound causes of the crisis," 'Le Patriote', close to the opposition Rally for Republicans (RDR), notes that President Gbagbo hinted, in his address to the nation, that "everything was all right in Côte d'Ivoire" until the outbreak of the Ivorian crisis last 19 September.

"In his address to the nation, the head of State intimated that the country was fit as a fiddle until the outbreak of the military insurrection 19 September 2002," the paper cites, adding that Gbagbo affirmed that, on the economic front, the indices were positive, with the return of the donors, the growth of 3 percent for the ongoing exercise and the forecast growth of 4 percent by 2005.

"Trust and Resistance", headlines Notre Voie, close to the ruling Ivorian Peoples Front (FPI).

Quoting Gbagbo, it indicates that Cote d'Ivoire was living a strange period of its history.

"The year 2002 was supposed to be a year of regained trust and hope.

But it ends in an unexpected context.

After years of economic and political uncertainties leading to the military coup of December 1999, Cote d'Ivoire had succeeded in gaining trust from the investors and the international community," the paper remarks, still quoting the President.

Gbagbo said "while his government and himself were preparing conditions for prosperity and democracy, the country's enemies were for their part, getting ready for war.

"While we were striving to put Cote d'Ivoire back on track, they (enemies) were working for its decline.

Those who are currently at war against us cannot say that they mean good for Cote d'Ivoire and Ivorians," Gbagbo said.

"The rebels are nery," read a headline of the pro-governmental Fraternite Matin newspaper, alluding to the New Year's address of Soro.

"One can't make head or tail of it.

The rebels also addressed a New Year's message to their fellow compatriots.

But we actually understand their move! Given the political and diplomatic impasse they are trapped into, they are just looking for a lifeline.

They pin the blame on the Ivorian Constitution, the national identity law and the rural land code, and castigate the presidential election of 22 October 2000," the paper says.

It adds: "to justify their crime, the rebels accuse Gbagbo of all sins.

" Quoting Soro's New Year address to the people of Cote d'Ivoire, the private daily, Le Jour, says in one headline:

"The crisis will soon come to an end.

" "2003 will be the year of genuine reconciliation, revival and reconstruction of the Ivorian nation.

We will turn Cote d'Ivoire into a real democratic nation that respects human rights and freedom.

A nation capable of inventing and initiating changes, that demand respect for one another, the participation of all in national life, a society of well-being and progress," the paper adds, quoting Soro.

"Soro explains the reasons for the rebellion," reads a headline in Soir'Info, another private paper that attributes the origin of the ongoing crisis to what the rebellion termed as "the sectarian Ivorite policy.

" "Nowadays, some Ivorians consider themselves as 100 percent citizens, while others just see themselves as 50 percent or 25 percent citizens," Soro explained, demanding France to "review its backing for an army composed of English-, Portuguese- and French-speaking mercenaries including hundreds of French nationals.

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