

10 key points about the Ivory Coast

The Ivory Coast is located in West Africa, bordered by Ghana to the East, Burkina Faso and Mali to the North, Guinea and Liberia to the West and the Atlantic Ocean (Gulf of Guinea) to the South, with a coastline that stretches 600km. The country's area is 322 463 km². Its warm tropical climate is characterised by four seasons: two dry seasons (a long one from December to March and a short one from August to September) and two rainy seasons (a long one from April to July and a short one from October to November). Despite the regular postponement of presidential

elections, the Ivory Coast received 352 million dollars worth of foreign investment in 2008, which represents a 5% growth from 2007. France remains the main foreign investor of the country, but it is facing increasing competition from China. Many opportunities are offered through three business portfolios: partnership, privatisation and outsource of public projects to the private sector. These possibilities are to be showcased in different sectors: agriculture, agro-industry, mining and energy, tourism, transport, telecommunications and other services.

- 1 > *Modern infrastructure*
 - 2 > *An important dynamic financial centre in West Africa*
 - 3 > *Expanding sectors*
 - 4 > *Qualified workforce*
 - 5 > *Privileged geographical situation*
 - 6 > *Promising internal market*
 - 7 > *Innovative and a particularly appealing consular framework*
 - 8 > *Constantly improving institutional business environment*
 - 9 > *Bold policy to protect, guarantee and actively promote private investment*
 - 10 > *Progressive return to a peaceful socio-political situation conducive to private investment*
- +** > **Code of Conduct / How to act during your first meeting.**

1 *Modern infrastructure*

- > A port network (Abidjan and San Pédro) dominated by **Abidjan**, the main transit and transshipment port in West and Central Africa;
- > Rapidly expanding airport network;
- > Dense and evolving telecommunications network
- > Highly developed economic capital (Abidjan) with little regional competition: tap water fit for drinking, long avenues, several bridges
- > One of the most competitive telecom sectors in Africa

2 *An important financial centre in West Africa*

The Ivory Coast offers a complete range of banking and financial institutions in both the private sector and the public sector, of which some are regional and local branches of international institutions:

- > Development banks: the Conseil de l'entente, the African Development Bank (ADB), temporarily relocated to Tunis, and the World Bank;
- > Commercial banks;
- > Insurance companies;
- > Mutual funds and agricultural funds;
- > the Bourse Régionale des Valeurs Mobilières (BRVM) and the Conseil Régional de l'Épargne et des Marchés Financiers (CREPMF).

3 *Expanding sectors*

Agriculture, which accounted for 28% of the GDP in 2008 and around 80% of the working population, remains the top expanding sector. Current government policy consists of diversifying the economy to combine arable and pastoral farming and logging. It is encouraging the production of rice, natural rubber and cane sugar as well as the development of the extraction industry.

Some specialists predict that its mining and oil production will be able to supplant some of the revenue from agriculture in the years ahead. In 2008, average oil production was estimated at 57 700 barrels per day, annual electricity production at 5 305 million kWz and annual natural gas production at 1 247 million cubic metres.

As regards telecommunications, the telephone network is developed but is still functioning below capacity. Recently, the big multinationals have regained interest in the region, as is demonstrated by their subsidiaries based in Abidjan in the sectors of transport and financial services.

4 *Qualified workforce*

Particular attention should be accorded to the quality of human resources. The Ivorian education system is well-known for the development of elitist establishments whose alumni represent the spearhead of the country's largest businesses. The current unemployment rate is estimated at 40% which has brought with it a relative decline in the cost of labour.

5 *Privileged geographical situation*

Bordering five countries, two of which are landlocked with 600 km of coastline, and as the economic leader of the West African Economic and Monetary Union, the Ivory Coast is inherently open to commerce and international investment. It provides privileged access to 60 million consumers in the WAEMU and to more than 200 million in the CEDEAO.

6 *Promising internal market*

With the highest GDP per capita of any country in Africa (1 800 USD), the Ivory Coast is initiating a post-crisis reconstruction characterised by big investment and development projects in both the public and private sectors. The internal market, initially considered limited and disorganised, has seen reforms both regionally (UEMOA) and globally (OMC) which facilitate exchanges and the promotion of investment.

7 *Innovative and a particularly appealing consular framework*

The Centre for the Promotion of Investments in the Ivory Coast (CEPICI) has been created and placed under the authority and guardianship of the Prime Minister in order to promote private investment and encourage the reinforcement of all economic activities that can contribute to the development of the Ivory Coast.

The National Bureau of Technical Studies and Development (BNETD) creates private and public development projects (technical, economic and environmental studies), guarantees the supervision of projects, in terms of implementation and exploitation, and advises the government on questions of development.

The Ivory Coast Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI-CI) serves as a platform for dialogue between the economic operators of the commercial industry and service sectors. To this effect, the Chamber informs companies on the regulation in force and any changes to it, advises on the means of economic development, helps ensure that businesses are represented on different committees and advisory bodies to present the views of the private sector, organises trips abroad for Ivorian businessmen and welcomes and oversees the visits of foreign businessmen to the Ivory Coast.

8 *Constantly improving institutional business environment*

This environment is characterised by the formalisation of:

- > An investment code;
- > A general tax code;
- > A general customs code;
- > A flexible work code;
- > A mining code;
- > A logging code;
- > A water code;
- > An environment code which demands a Study on Environmental Impact (EIE) for every investment project with significant environmental impact.

9 *A bold policy to protect, guarantee and actively promote private investment*

- > The Ivory Coast provides a one stop shop to set up a company and implements a policy allowing greater protection of investments and a programme of public works on the road network that opens up the country to the sub-region.
- > The Ivory Coast has signed bilateral agreements with France, Germany, Belgium, Norway, Canada, the UK, Italy, Switzerland, the USA and China to attract foreign investors.
- > An appealing investment code offers important guarantees to investors: it enshrines the principle of free transfer outside the Ivory Coast of any revenue generated by investment, including, if necessary, liquidation surplus. The code authorises both administrative and arbitral legal appeals, provided that the investor deems them fit to invoke to sort out conflicts arising from its application. It also allows for an administrative appeal before a commission specially created for this purpose, namely the National Commission for the Promotion of Investments (COM-INVEST), whose mission it is to ensure that the arrangements defined by the code are respected within the stated deadlines.
- > The privatisation of the Abidjan – Ouagadougou railway line has opened up the country and improved its logistical performance.

10 *Progressive return to a peaceful socio-political situation conducive to private investment*

The socio-political crisis of September 2002 was concluded with the Ouagadougou Accord, signed in 2007. The identification of the population and the establishment of electoral lists are in progress for the presidential elections planned for the 29th November 2009. This election, postponed several times already, is the last obstacle to a complete return to business in the Ivory Coast, which has been the window into West Africa for some time.

Code of Conduct

How to act during your first meeting.

Be careful not to put too much faith in available economic publications and statistics which may not be recent or based on accurate sources.

It is strongly recommended to research partnerships with local entrepreneurs. This opens doors to the political class, who are very influential in business, and also intervenes to protect different partners in business relations.

A good knowledge of communal associations and consular networks will enable you to develop business relations and better determine the evolution of the economic and social climate, enabling you to make strategic decisions as a result.

In contractual relations and as far as possible, it is recommended to go to arbitration. La Cour Commune de Justice et d'Arbitrage (C.C.J.A.) of the Organisation pour l'Harmonisation en Afrique du Droit des Affaires (O.H.A.D.A), based in the Ivory Coast, encourages this course of action.