

# African Bank Chief Chosen as Interim Prime Minister of Ivory Coast

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**By REUTERS**

ABIDJAN, [Ivory Coast](#), Dec. 4 (Reuters) - African mediators chose Charles Konan Banny, the governor of West Africa's central bank, as Ivory Coast's interim prime minister on Sunday, a step meant to break a deadlock in the country's peace negotiations.

Ivory Coast, the world's top cocoa grower and formerly one of the continent's most prosperous nations, has been split in two since rebels seized the northern part of the country as they tried to oust President Laurent Gbagbo three years ago. Several peace deals brokered by the United Nations have failed to reunite the country.

"Our achievement today is a victory for all of the people of Ivory Coast," President [Olusegun Obasanjo](#) said at a news conference here, with Mr. Gbagbo at his side.

"For those who are on the government side and those on the other side there is no victor and no vanquished," he said after meeting with Mr. Gbagbo and President [Thabo Mbeki](#) of South Africa, who has also been mediating the crisis.

Mr. Banny will have an expanded mandate under an agreement supported by the United Nations giving him powers to carry out disarmament and changes in the elections process with the aim of organizing an election for president by the end of October 2006. A United Nations resolution allowed Mr. Gbagbo to remain in power for an additional year after an election set for October was postponed.

Ivory Coast's warring factions were supposed to agree on the new prime minister as part of an African Union peace plan endorsed by the United Nations Security Council.

But the government, opposition parties and the rebels had been haggling unsuccessfully for weeks.

The rebel leader, Guillaume Soro, has said the United Nations proposal was unclear on what powers the prime minister would have and has written to the United Nations secretary general, [Kofi Annan](#), with a new proposal under which the two warring sides would share power.

The United Nations special adviser on the prevention of genocide, Juan E. Méndez, said Saturday during a trip to Abidjan that simmering tensions could lead to "massive and serious violations of human rights" unless a solution was found.

The rebels have many grievances, but ethnic tension over cocoa and coffee land is central to the conflict. The split is between those who see themselves as native Ivorians, mainly southern Christians and animists who control the government, and those, mostly Muslims, whose forebears came from neighboring countries or who are native northerners.

The rebels were not immediately available to comment on the mediators' choice of Mr. Banny, but the opposition welcomed his nomination.

"We are very happy about his nomination and we hope he will succeed in his mission for all of Ivory Coast," said Alphonse Djedje Mady, the opposition leader.

Mr. Banny, a political outsider, had been a leading candidate for the post. He is governor of the Central Bank of West African States, whose common currency, the CFA franc, is used by eight countries in the region.