

TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

TELECONGO

FEBRUARY 15, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT

CONGO 2026 ELECTORAL STRATEGY: DIPLOMACY, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND DOMESTIC CHALLENGES

A Dual Narrative of Strategic Stability and Growing Crises Ahead of the Polls



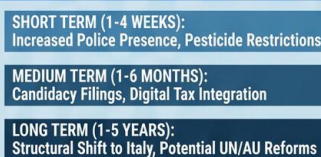
THE DOMESTIC CRISIS & SOCIAL CHALLENGES



KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS & DEEP DIVE TRENDS



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RISK ASSESSMENT & CONTRARIAN SCENARIOS



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THE CONGOLESE ADMINISTRATION
IS ANCHORING ITS 2026
ELECTORAL STRATEGY ON HIGH-
LEVEL DIPLOMACY AND
INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT
WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY
NAVIGATING A GROWING YOUTH
SUICIDE CRISIS AND INTENSIFYING
ITS RELIANCE ON STRATEGIC
PARTNERSHIPS WITH ITALY AND
CHINA.

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

The February 15, 2026, broadcasts from Telecongo reflect a state in a period of intense institutional preparation for the 2026 general elections. The administration of President Denis Sassou Nguesso is projecting an image of stability and strategic relevance, highlighted by the high-profile representation at the Italy-Africa Summit and the African Union (AU) Summit in Addis Ababa. The promotion of the "Mattei Plan" serves as a centerpiece for a new narrative of "balanced partnership" with Europe, focusing on energy, agriculture, and infrastructure as pillars of national development. Domestically, the government is leveraging the success of the

first National Agricultural Fair (GFAC) to argue that its policies are yielding tangible results in food sovereignty and rural revitalization.

Concurrent with these diplomatic successes, the state is managing significant social and security challenges. A prominent theme of the day is the "Sniper" pesticide suicide crisis among Congolese youth, which the state media is treating as a public health emergency requiring both regulation and moral intervention. Simultaneously, the military and police (Force Publique) are conducting large-scale planning sessions to "secure" the upcoming 2026 elections, signaling an early move to consolidate social order. The editorial tone is one of disciplined nationalism, framing external partners like China as "loyal friends" while emphasizing internal "unity and peace" as prerequisites for continued progress.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

International Strategic Positioning

- The Congo's participation in the [Italy-Africa Summit](#) highlights the adoption of the "Mattei Plan" as a new framework for cooperation in energy and infrastructure.
- Advocacy for [UN Security Council reform](#) through the C10 committee, demanding two permanent seats for Africa to correct historical "injustice."
- Strengthening of the [Sino-Congolese axis](#) through cultural diplomacy and the celebration of 50 years of cooperation.

Domestic Governance and Election Preparation

- The Force Publique finalized its [2026 election security roadmap](#), emphasizing "anticipation" and "professionalism."
- The successful closure of the [National Agricultural Fair \(GFAC\)](#) after ten days, with a mandate for a second edition in August 2026.
- Deployment of the [PDRC digital platform](#) to modernize and secure tax collection across local collectivities.

Crisis Management and Social Welfare

- National alarm over the ["Sniper" insecticide suicide trend](#), particularly among youth suffering from depression.
- The [WHO 2025 review](#) and 2026 health planning, focusing on epidemic prevention (Ebola, Cholera) and vaccine coverage.
- Implementation of solar-powered [drinking water systems](#) in remote regions like Likuala by the SNPC.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Armed Conflict & Militarization

- General Division Charoko emphasized that the [Force Publique](#) must remain vigilant against "protean" threats and hybrid disinformation ahead of the 2026 polls.
- The burial and national tribute to [General Philippe Longonda](#) served as a moment of military-state consolidation and honoring the defense hierarchy.

Diplomacy & Statecraft

- Congo is acting as a mediator in the [Libyan crisis](#), with President Sassou Nguesso engaging the Libyan Presidential Council.
- The European Union is funding a [transport corridor](#) linking Pointe-Noire, Kinshasa, and Bangui, aimed at regional integration.

Energy & Critical Minerals

- The [Mattei Plan](#) identifies Congo as a pilot country for energy development projects.
- Discussions on the ["Loop of Friendship"](#) energy project to link the power grids of Congo, DRC, and Angola.

Leadership Dynamics & Governance

- Presidential supporters in [Philo and Madibou](#) are already holding meetings to endorse Sassou Nguesso for a first-round victory in 2026.
- The promotion of the ["Loi Mbara"](#) to protect the legal and social rights of women and girls is being framed as a major legislative achievement.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

Strategic Diversification of External Dependency

Congo is attempting to transition from a classic "aid-recipient" model to a "strategic hub" model. By engaging Italy through the Mattei Plan while maintaining its deep infrastructure ties with China and its security ties with the EU, the state is seeking to maximize its maneuverability. The [port of Pointe-Noire](#) development is the physical manifestation of this trend, intended to serve as a regional gateway for the Global Gateway

strategy. However, the heavy emphasis on these "partnerships" also reveals a persistent need for external capital and expertise to drive domestic modernization.

The Securitization of the 2026 Electoral Cycle

A recurring subtext across multiple reports is the early preparation for the 2026 elections. The [Force Publique's planning sessions](#) are not just about logistical security; they represent a narrative of state control over potential civil unrest. By identifying "disinformation" and "social media manipulation" as primary threats, the government is signaling a likely crackdown on digital dissent. The frequent "meetings of support" for the incumbent candidate, often merged with government project inaugurations, indicate a blurred line between state function and partisan campaigning.

Youth Alienation and the Pesticide Crisis

The focus on "Sniper" pesticide suicides represents a rare media admission of a significant social crisis. The [chronicle of the neighborhoods](#) details a pattern where youth, largely due to "romantic disappointment" or economic debt, are using household chemicals as lethal tools. While the state frames this as a "mental health" and "parental supervision" issue, it underscores a deeper trend of youth despair and the lack of accessible mental healthcare or economic prospects for the younger demographic.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

Electoral Mobilization and Elite Consolidation

- The [Union for the Republic \(UR\)](#) and other partisan groups are holding "grand meetings" to guarantee a 2026 victory, suggesting high levels of elite coordination to maintain the status quo.
- The digitalization of revenue via the [PDRC platform](#) is a double-edged sword: while it reduces "erosion of resources," it also centralizes financial control, potentially upsetting local power brokers who benefited from informal tax regimes.

Social Instability and Health Vulnerabilities

- The WHO reports that [influenza has become the second leading cause](#) of medical consultations, indicating a shift in the epidemiological burden alongside persistent risks of Ebola and Polio.
- Regional inequality remains a flashpoint; projects in Likuala and Sanga are being heavily publicized to counter narratives of neglect in the [northern and peripheral](#) departments.

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

Framing the Multipolar World

The broadcasts portray a world that is "strategic and unified," where Africa—and Congo specifically—is a critical node in global supply chains. The "Outside World" is not framed as a threat but as an [arena of opportunity](#), provided Congo remains stable. This is a reaction to shifting global geopolitics

where European powers (like Italy) are seeking alternatives to Russian energy and Chinese dominance, and Congo is positioning itself as that alternative.

Regional Hegemony and Mediation

- Congo's mediation in [Libya](#) and its military cooperation with the [DRC](#) project a "strong/stable" image of the Nguesso regime as a regional anchor.
- The [maritime security strategy](#) in the Gulf of Guinea, supported by EU Expertise France, shows Congo taking an active role in securing global trade routes against piracy.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The economic outlook is centered on agricultural industrialization and infrastructure as the primary drivers of growth. The government is moving to formalize the "informal sector" through digitalization and better market facilities. Youth employment is being targeted via "productive school" initiatives in technical sectors like cacao transformation and mining.

- **Foreign Direct Investment:** The UN has invested [over 45 million dollars](#) in Congo during 2025.
- **Agricultural Production:** The cacao unit in Wesso has a production capacity of [6 to 8 tons of chocolate](#) per year.
- **Regional Trade:** Shrimp distribution from Niari involves investments of [150,000 CFA per turn](#), targeting markets in Brazzaville and Kinshasa.
- **Infrastructure Finance:** A [3.12 billion CFA subvention](#) was signed with the French Development Agency (AFD) for maritime projects.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

Personnel shifts reflect a combination of military continuity and ecclesiastical expansion, alongside political positioning for the 2026 elections.

- **General Division Charoko:** Consolidating power as the [lead coordinator](#) for the 2026 election security strategy.
- **Monseigneur François Aliday Mbangi:** Consecrated as [Bishop Coadjutor](#) of the Diocese of Nkai, representing a significant shift in local religious leadership.
- **Eric Olivier Sébastien Dibas Frank:** Positioned as a key [manager of maritime affairs](#) and state action at sea.
- **Stella Sassou Nguesso:** Increasingly visible in [inter-religious mediation](#) and local development projects, signaling a potential expansion of her political role.

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

The lead stories for the day are dominated by high-level diplomacy (Italy-Africa Summit) and national achievements (Agricultural Fair). These are given maximum airtime and nationalistic tones, framing the President as a visionary global leader. "Buried" or minimized stories include the specific details of the mine collapse in Rubaya (DRC) and the full extent of domestic youth unrest, which are presented either as external tragedies or individual psychological failures rather than systemic issues. The tone is reassuring and authoritative, with a conspicuous absence of any critical opposition voices regarding the 2026 election security plans.

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The state media meticulously frames its allies as reliable and its competitors as outdated. Africa is consistently framed as a "major strategic partner" that is no longer satisfied with colonial-style relationships.

- **Italy (Meloni):** Portrayed as a **principled and innovative** partner. Quote: "Proposing to Africa a new model of cooperation... energy, agriculture, and infrastructure" ([\(20260215-1\)](#)).
- **China:** Framed as a **stable and loyal** long-term ally. Quote: "Testimony of a frank, loyal and mutually advantageous cooperation" ([\(20260215-3\)](#)).
- **United Nations:** Viewed as a **competent but flawed** institution requiring reform to be "just." Quote: "An act of justice before history" regarding seat reform ([\(20260215-2\)](#)).
- **Denis Sassou Nguesso:** Framed as a **strong and sage** peacemaker. Quote: "Man of great experience and great wisdom, grand friend of the youth" ([\(20260215-12\)](#)).

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

- **Narrative Seeding:** The government is aggressively seeding the idea of an [inevitable first-round victory](#) for the incumbent in 2026 to discourage opposition momentum.
- **The Disinformation Defense:** The Force Publique is framing potential protests or dissent as ["hybrid threats"](#) and "disinformation campaigns," providing a pre-emptive justification for information control measures.

- **State Media Spin:** Local successes, like a small solar water pump or a school bourgeois, are given equal weight to international summits, creating a "omnipresent state" narrative.

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

Consolidation Hypotheses

- The administration will likely tighten [insecticide regulations](#) in the coming weeks as a populist response to the suicide crisis.
- Expect a surge in [infrastructure project inaugurations](#) throughout 2026 as the election approaches.
- The "Mattei Plan" will lead to a specific [energy partnership agreement](#) involving ENI and the Congolese state within the next six months.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Increased police presence in urban centers as "preventative" election security begins. Implementation of new pesticide sale restrictions.

Medium Term (1-6 Months): Formalization of the 2026 presidential candidacy filings. Integration of digital tax platforms in major ports like Pointe-Noire to boost state revenue ahead of campaign spending.

Long Term (1-5 Years): Structural shift toward Italy as a primary European energy partner. Potential constitutional or structural changes to the UN Security Council if African lobbying (C10) gains momentum.

RISK ASSESSMENT

- **Risk:** Civil unrest triggered by the 2026 election cycle. **Triggers:** Opposition disqualification or perceived fraud. **Likelihood:** Moderate-High. **Impact:** High (economic disruption/sanctions). **Mitigations:** Force Publique "professionalism" and regional mediation.
- **Risk:** Public health epidemic (Ebola/Measles). **Triggers:** Porous borders with DRC or vaccine fatigue. **Likelihood:** Moderate. **Impact:** High (mortality/lockdowns). **Mitigations:** WHO/State [vaccination campaigns](#).
- **Risk:** Youth social collapse (Suicide/Crime). **Triggers:** Failure of the "informal sector" modernization. **Likelihood:** High. **Impact:** Moderate. **Mitigations:** Mental health [awareness](#) and vocational training.
- **Risk:** Infrastructure project failure. **Triggers:** Diversion of funds or technical debt. **Likelihood:** Low-Moderate. **Impact:** Moderate. **Mitigations:** EU/China [oversight](#).
- **Risk:** Maritime Piracy escalation. **Triggers:** Regional instability in the Gulf of Guinea. **Likelihood:** Moderate. **Impact:** High (trade blockage). **Mitigations:** EU-funded [cooperation](#).

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

The broadcasts omit critical perspectives that are necessary for a realistic risk assessment:

- The **actual economic viability** of the Mattei Plan; specifically, how much capital is Italy truly committing vs. existing loans.
- The **perspectives of the youth** involved in the "Sniper" crisis; why exactly they feel the state has failed them.

- The **status of the political opposition**; their silence in the transcript suggests they are either suppressed or preparing an asymmetric strategy.
- The **environmental impact** of the intensified maritime and port projects in Pointe-Noire.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

- **The "Brittle State" Hypothesis:** The high-profile international summits and military planning are not signs of strength, but a "theatre of competence" to mask an imminent fiscal crisis caused by the failure to diversify away from oil.
- **The "Partnership Trap":** The Mattei Plan is not a "balanced partnership" but a desperate attempt by Europe to secure energy at any cost, which will actually entrench Congolese authoritarianism and "Dutch Disease" for another decade.
- **Black Swan Event:** A sudden, massive environmental disaster in the [Congo River ecosystem](#) (due to increased industrial traffic) that cripples the regional food supply and triggers an uncontrollable peasant revolt.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- Formalize a **national mental health strategy** that moves beyond regulating chemicals to addressing youth economic alienation.
- Ensure **transparency in the PDRC platform** rollout to prevent it from becoming a tool for political victimization.

- Leverage the **AU C10 momentum** to secure tangible concessions from the UN on development aid, even if permanent seats remain elusive.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- Monitor **Force Publique movements** as a leading indicator of pre-electoral political risk.
- Explore opportunities in the **energy-agriculture nexus** under the Mattei Plan pilot projects.
- Factor in **digital compliance costs** as the state intensifies its tax digitalization and "informal sector" formalization.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

The day's sessions focused on legal frameworks for social protection, maritime regulation, and administrative modernization.

• **BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:**

- **Loi Mbara:** A landmark law aimed at protecting the legal, social, and economic rights of women and girls ([20260215-12](#)).
- **Code de la Marine Marchande:** Revised maritime code to modernize shipping and port operations ([20260215-25](#)).
- **Tax Digitalization Mandate:** Policy directing all local collectivities to adopt the PDRC platform ([20260215-21](#)).

• **HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:**

- **Force Publique 2026 Planning:** A three-day session to finalize electoral security ([20260215-23](#)).
- **WHO 2025 Annual Review:** A high-level briefing on national health security and epidemiological trends ([20260215-17](#)).

KEY STORIES

- **Italy-Africa Summit:** Minister Gakosso represents Congo in Rome to discuss the Mattei Plan and energy partnerships ([20260215-1](#)).
- **UNSC Reform Advocacy:** The AU C10 committee demands two permanent seats for Africa on the Security Council ([20260215-2](#)).
- **National Agricultural Fair (GFAC):** The first edition closes in Bombou Mingadi, marking a milestone in food sovereignty ([20260215-11](#)).
- **Sniper Suicide Crisis:** A deep dive into the use of pesticides for suicide among Congolese youth ([20260215-6](#)).
- **Election Security Roadmap:** General Charoko leads the Force Publique in planning for the 2026 presidential elections ([20260215-23](#)).
- **WHO 2025 Health Review:** Report on measles, cholera, and the integration of Congo into the flu surveillance network ([20260215-17](#)).
- **Sino-Congolese Spring Festival:** Celebration of 50 years of ties and the lighting of the Twin Towers in Brazzaville ([20260215-3](#)).

- **Wesso Cacao Transformation:** Inauguration of a new chocolate production unit at the Wesso technical high school ([\(20260215-3\)](#)).
- **Likuala Solar Water Systems:** SNPC launches solar-powered drinking water projects for eight neighborhoods in Infondo ([\(20260215-5\)](#)).
- **General Longonda Funeral:** National honors for the late general, emphasizing military unity ([\(20260215-10\)](#)).
- **PDRC Digital Tax Platform:** Validation of a new system to secure local government revenue ([\(20260215-21\)](#)).
- **Niari Shrimp Trade:** Analysis of the informal shrimp economy and its link to urban markets ([\(20260215-19\)](#)).
- **Libyan Mediation:** President Sassou Nguesso receives the Libyan Presidential Council head to discuss security ([\(20260215-2\)](#)).
- **Lake Tanganyika Biodiversity:** A report on the unique aquatic life and environmental risks to the lake ([\(20260215-32\)](#)).
- **Saint Valentine's vs. Religious Values:** Debate on the commercialization of love vs. Christian and traditional perspectives ([\(20260215-25\)](#)).

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Today's Media Trends is a public interest experiment in applying deep thematic trend analysis to television news coverage from around the world to explore how responsibly applied advanced AI can help journalists and scholars better understand the overarching

trends, themes and patterns of our global world.

No data is used to train or tune any AI model.

Each morning, in collaboration with the Internet Archive's TV News Archive, we apply Google's Gemini 3 to deeply examine yesterday's coverage from each television news channel to tease out the overarching themes and trends of its news coverage into a richly annotated thematic analysis. Each high-level insight is connected back to the original broadcast, allowing journalists and scholars to understand the dominate themes and trends and instantly click out to the underlying sources for details.

By helping journalists and scholars see the broader trends and patterns of global news coverage, this analysis helps them identify relevant stories and coverage they might not otherwise have encountered and uncover connections, emphases and narrative shifts that enable more comprehensive reporting and deeper, evidence-based research.

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