

# TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

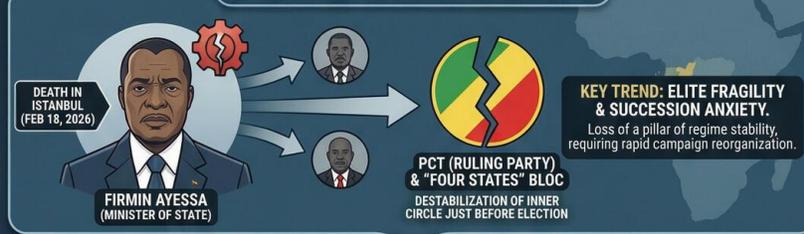
## TELECONGO

FEBRUARY 18, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT

### THE REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO: NAVIGATING STRATEGIC TRANSITION, ELITE SHOCKS, & PRE-ELECTION SECURITY (REPORT FEB 18, 2026)

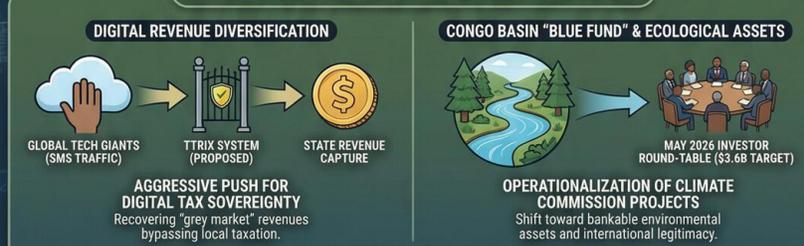
#### ELITE SUCCESSION SHOCK & FRAGILITY



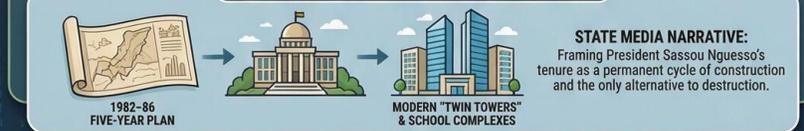
#### PRE-ELECTION SECURITY & FRAGILE CONSENSUS



#### ECONOMIC STATECRAFT & DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY



#### THE CULT OF THE "GRAND BÂTISSEUR" (GREAT BUILDER)



#### STRATEGIC FORESIGHT & KEY IMPLICATIONS



# TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

## TELECONGO

FEBRUARY 18, 2026

---

### THE REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO NAVIGATES A STRATEGIC TRANSITION AMID ELITE SUCCESSION SHOCKS AND HEIGHTENED PRE-ELECTION SECURITY PLANNING

#### DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

---

The Republic of the Congo reached a critical inflection point on February 18, 2026, as the sudden death of Minister of State Firmin Ayessa in Istanbul, Turkey, destabilized the inner circle of President Denis Sassou Nguesso just weeks before the March 2026 presidential elections. Ayessa, a "cacique" of the ruling Congolese Party of Labor (PCT) and a member of the influential "Four States" informal power bloc, represented a pillar of regime stability. His passing, coupled with the deaths of media regulator Philippe Mvouo and Télé Congo Technical Director Brunel Cyril Titacho, has cast a somber shadow over the state apparatus, forcing the government to manage a dual narrative of national mourning and vigorous election preparation ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).

Simultaneously, the conclusion of the Djambala political consultations signaled a fragile consensus between the government and seg-

ments of the opposition regarding electoral governance. While the government highlights these talks as evidence of democratic maturity, the military high command is taking no chances, finalizing a "Global Approach" security strategy to counter "protean and hybrid threats" and social media-driven disinformation during the upcoming vote. Externally, the state is aggressively pursuing international legitimacy and technical modernization, highlighted by high-level judicial negotiations with France and a push for digital tax sovereignty involving the recovery of "grey market" SMS revenues from global tech giants ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

#### MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

---

- **Death of Firmin Ayessa and Elite Destabilization:** The passing of the Minister of State for Public Service, Labor, and Social Security in Istanbul represents a major loss for the PCT's campaign infrastructure. Ayessa was the political commissioner for Pointe-Noire and a key mediator within the "Four States" power group (alongside Pierre Ngolo, Jean-Jacques Bouya, and Gilbert Ondongo) ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Conclusion of Djambala Political Consultations:** Actors from the majority, opposition, and civil society concluded talks in Djambala with 12 key recommendations, though only six have reached full execution. New priorities include the introduction of biometrics and the reduction of candidacy bonds ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Finalization of Election Security Doctrine:** General of Division Guy-Blanchard Okoï convened the final planning conference for the force publique, focusing on the "Global Approach" to secure the March 12 (special) and March 15 (general) election dates ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

- **Judicial Rapprochement with France:** Minister of Justice Aimé Ange Wilfrid Bininga met with French counterpart Gérald Darmanin in Paris to revise a 1974 judicial cooperation convention, aiming to modernize legal frameworks against transnational crime ([Source](#)).
- **Congo Basin "Blue Fund" Operationalization:** The Ministerial Council of the Congo Basin Climate Commission validated technical dossiers for a major investor round-table scheduled for May 2026 in Nairobi, targeting \$3.6 billion for 43 priority ecological projects ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Digital Sovereignty and Tax Recovery Initiative:** The Senate is reviewing a proposal from the Federation of United Nations (Nicholas Roudin) to implement the "Ttrix" system, designed to capture state revenue from international SMS traffic currently bypassing local taxation via hubs in Dubai and Mumbai ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

## KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

---

### Geopolitics and International Relations

- The Congo-France axis is being updated via the revision of the 52-year-old judicial convention, reflecting a move toward international legal standards and modernized mutual assistance ([Source](#)).
- Bilateral relations with Turkey are highlighted by the Turkish Ambassador's condolences following Ayessa's death in Istanbul, emphasizing Turkey's role as a medical destination for Congolese elites ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

### Domestic Stability and Pre-Election Order

- The military has been mandated by President Sassou Nguesso to ensure "peace, security, and transparency" for the 2026 vote, explicitly targeting "disinformation on social networks" as a threat to national unity ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- The Djambala consultations aimed to prevent "fractures of the people" by evaluating the status of 2022 Owando recommendations, indicating a state effort to preempt civil unrest through dialogue ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

### Economic Statecraft and Investment Climate

- The implementation of the Single Treasury Account (CUT) is being pushed by FMI experts and the Senate to address "opaque management" and stabilize public finances ([Source](#)).
- The "Blue Fund" for the Congo Basin is transitioning from "promises to certain financing," with 77% of projects now stated and 23% by regional organizations, signaling a shift toward bankable environmental assets ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

### State Capacity and Infrastructure

- The National Petroleum Company (SNPC) is taking a prominent role in social infrastructure, funding the 95%-complete modernization of the Angola Libre and Amitié school complexes ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

- The Ministry of Agriculture is promoting "food sovereignty" through the Great Agricultural Fair (GFAC), showcasing solar-powered drying/smoking technologies developed by Congolese researchers ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

## Legislation

- **Electoral Law Reform Proposals:** Recommendations from Djambala include biometric integration, a cap on campaign financing, and state funding for political parties ([Source](#)).
- **Judicial Cooperation Convention (Draft):** Revision of the 1974 agreement with France to incorporate international best practices and anti-cybercrime measures ([Source](#)).
- **School Orientation Law:** Saluted by the UN Resident Coordinator as a major outcome of the Estates General of Education ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **BTS State Diploma Decree:** Formalization of the National Brevet de Technicien Supérieur as a state-signed diploma ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

## LEGISLATION/POLICY

---

Legislative activity is currently dominated by the "Djambala Recommendations," which serve as a policy framework for the 2026 elections. Concurrently, the Senate is focusing on financial reforms urged by international institutions and exploring new regulatory frameworks for the digital economy and telecommunications taxation ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

## BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED

- **Digital Tax Sovereignty Framework (Proposed):** A legislative pathway to mandate a national gateway for all incoming international SMS traffic to ensure tax capture from entities like Google and Meta ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Single Treasury Account (CUT) Reform:** Policy to centralize all public funds into a single account to prevent administrative silos and commercial bank leakage ([Source](#)).
- **Revised Code of Electoral Governance:** A proposed shift toward biometrics and bond reductions for candidates ([Source](#)).

## HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS

- **Djambala Political Consultation Closing:** Minister Pierre Mabiala presented the final report to 200 political actors, prioritizing "peace and unity" ([Source](#)).
- **Force Publique Planning Conference:** General Guy-Blanchard Okoi addressed the military leadership on the "Global Approach" to election security ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Congo-UN Cooperation Meeting:** Senate President Pierre Ngolo received a UN-linked delegation to discuss digital legislative infrastructure ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

## DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

---

### Elite Fragility and Succession Anxiety

The death of Firmin Ayessa is more than a ministerial vacancy; it is a rupture in the generational cohort that has sustained President Sassou Nguesso's rule since 1979. State me-

dia repeatedly emphasizes Ayessa's "unfailing loyalty" and his role in the "Four States" block, highlighting a nervous awareness within the PCT of its aging leadership. The loss of a political heavyweight just before the campaign (Feb 28 start) may necessitate a rapid reorganization of the campaign hierarchy, particularly in the northern strongholds and the economic hub of Pointe-Noire ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).

## **The "Securitization" of the Democratic Process**

A notable shift toward a military-led governance of the electoral cycle is evident. The "Global Approach" security doctrine, presented by the high command, treats the election as a "major operational challenge" on par with a military engagement. By labeling social media as a primary vector for "hybrid threats," the state is establishing a narrative justification for potential internet shutdowns or censorship if unrest occurs during the March 12-15 voting period ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

## **Digital Statecraft and Revenue Diversification**

Congo is attempting to move beyond petroleum reliance by asserting sovereignty over its digital borders. The proposal to tax the "grey market" of SMS messages from global tech firms represents an advanced form of economic statecraft. This move, coupled with the "Blue Fund" for the Congo Basin, shows a regime attempting to build a post-oil economy based on digital monitoring and environmental credit arbitrage ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).

## **The Cult of the "Grand Bâtitseur" (Great Builder)**

State broadcasting has intensified its historical revisionism, casting President Sassou

Nguesso's tenure as a "permanent cycle of construction." Reports highlight the 1982-1986 Five-Year Plan alongside modern "Twin Towers" and school modernizations to equate his leadership with the literal physical manifestation of the nation. This "Great Builder" narrative is the core of the 2026 re-election strategy, framing the incumbent as the only alternative to a return to pre-1979 "destruction" ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).

## **STRATEGIC FORESIGHT**

---

### **Short Term (1-4 Weeks)**

- Expect a high-profile state funeral for Firmin Ayessa, likely used as a mass mobilization event for the PCT before the official campaign begins on February 28.
- Increased military presence in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire as the "Global Approach" security plan is activated for the anticipatory vote on March 12.

### **Medium Term (1-6 Months)**

- Post-election reshuffling of the cabinet to replace Ayessa and potentially other aging "caciques," signaling whether Sassou Nguesso intends to promote a younger generation of technocrats.
- Activation of the Nairobi investor round-table in May 2026, which will test the international community's appetite for Blue Fund environmental credits ([Source](#)).

### **Long Term (1-5 Years)**

- Structural move toward digital monitoring and taxation if the "Ttrix" system is implemented, potentially creating friction with US-based tech giants (Google, Meta).

- Ongoing consolidation of ZAPs (Protected Agricultural Zones) as the centerpiece of a transition away from the "oil curse," though success depends on state ability to maintain infrastructure against "unsanding" and erosion ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

## RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

---

### For International Policy

- **Security:** Monitoring of the "Global Approach" is necessary to ensure election security does not devolve into the suppression of legitimate political expression or digital blackouts.
- **Diplomatic:** The judicial convention with France serves as a template for other nations looking to update treaties with Central African states regarding cybercrime and extradition ([Source](#)).
- **Economic:** Support for the Congo Basin Climate Commission projects offers a high-leverage entry point for ESG-focused international aid and carbon-offset diplomacy ([Source](#)).

### For Private Sector/Investors

- **Telecom Risk:** Tech firms should anticipate new regulatory hurdles and mandatory "passageways" for digital traffic as the state seeks to close "grey market" tax gaps ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Construction/Infrastructure Opportunities:** SNPC's move into funding social infrastructure suggests a trend of "petroleum-funded CSR" projects that could provide contracts for specialized construction firms ([Source](#)).

- **Agricultural Innovation:** The push for food sovereignty through GFAC highlights a growing market for mid-scale solar-powered processing and storage technologies in rural Congo ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

## 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.

This report is entirely machine generated using Gemini 3 and may include errors and

omissions. Please verify all findings. No data is used to train or tune any AI model.

For questions or suggestions, please contact [kalev.leetaru5@gmail.com](mailto:kalev.leetaru5@gmail.com). You can also learn

more about the GDELT Project at <https://blog.gdeltproject.org/> and the Internet Archive's TV News Archive at <https://archive.org/details/tv>.