SAGA ADVISORY

AFRICA ENERGY INTELLIGENCE

AFRICA OIL+GAS REPORT

AfDB Approves €200 Million Loan to Upgrade Côte d'Ivoire's Refinery

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The African Development Bank (AfDB) has approved a €200 million loan to finance the so-called 'Clean Air' project at Côte d'Ivoire's national refinery. The funding represents a significant institutional commitment to modernising downstream petroleum infrastructure in Francophone West Africa, a region where refinery upgrades have historically been constrained by limited access to long-tenor development finance.

The 'Clean Air' project title suggests the upgrade is oriented toward improving fuel quality standards and reducing emissions from refinery operations, aligning with broader continental trends toward cleaner hydrocarbon products. As urbanisation accelerates across West Africa and vehicle fleets expand, pressure has mounted on legacy refineries — many originally built in the 1960s and 1970s — to produce fuels compliant with more stringent environmental and health benchmarks. Côte d'Ivoire's refinery serves not only the domestic market but also supplies neighbouring landlocked countries, making this upgrade strategically significant at a regional level.

The AfDB loan signals continued multilateral appetite for downstream energy investment in Sub-Saharan Africa, even as development finance institutions navigate competing pressures between energy access mandates and decarbonisation commitments. For Côte d'Ivoire, which has been consolidating its position as a regional energy hub, the investment reinforces national ambitions to retain refining capacity onshore rather than depend on imported refined products — a vulnerability exposed repeatedly during global supply disruptions.

For international energy service companies, a refinery modernisation project of this scale typically involves process engineering studies, procurement of specialist equipment, civil and mechanical construction, and commissioning services. Norwegian companies with downstream process expertise and established track records in complex industrial upgrades are well positioned to engage — either directly or through EPC consortia — particularly given Norway's longstanding bilateral relationships with Francophone African development institutions. The project's financing structure through the AfDB also provides a degree of counterparty security that purely commercially financed projects in the region may lack.

Timelines, contracting strategies, and procurement windows have not been disclosed in available reporting, meaning service companies should treat this as an active monitoring situation. Early engagement with the AfDB's procurement pipeline and with Côte d'Ivoire's national energy stakeholders would be the appropriate near-term step.

Why this matters to partners and clients of Saga

Norwegian engineering and industrial services firms should register this project on their AfDB procurement radar immediately, as multilateral-financed refinery upgrades typically run competitive international tendering processes where European companies have a strong participation record. Companies with downstream process technology, heat exchanger systems, or emissions-reduction equipment should begin mapping local partner relationships in Abidjan. Saga recommends monitoring AfDB project procurement notices and initiating contact with the relevant national refinery operator for early positioning.

PARTNER ANGLES

- **Service:** Process engineering and industrial services firms should track AfDB procurement notices for EPC or specialist equipment contracts tied to the Clean Air upgrade scope.
- **Pipeline:** Refinery modernisation often entails internal piping reconfigurations and utilities upgrades, creating targeted opportunities for pipe fabrication and installation specialists.

- **Subsea/FPSO:** Limited direct relevance at this stage, but firms with offshore-to-onshore product transfer expertise may find adjacencies if the upgrade affects marine terminal or jetty infrastructure.
- **LNG:** If the Clean Air project involves fuel-switching components or gas integration at the refinery, LNG or gas processing technology providers should monitor scope definition closely.
- **Drilling:** No direct drilling angle at present; firms should monitor whether upstream feedstock security investments accompany the downstream upgrade programme.

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