
Angola Monitor

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The Angola Monitor covers the politics, economics, development, democracy and human rights of Angola. It is published quarterly by Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA).

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This issue is also available in Portuguese.

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Political news

Election observer missions but possibly no EU team

Angolan President Jose Eduardo dos Santos has invited a number of organisational and individual observers to witness the forthcoming election. Amongst them are the African Union (AU), the European Union (EU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) as well as former Presidents from Ghana, East Timor and Mozambique amongst others. Opposition party, the União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA) have appealed to the US government and international community to closely follow the electoral process. However it is uncertain if the EU will send an observer mission. It is understood the EU have requested unfettered access to polling stations which the Angolans are said to have refused. Negotiations as to whether the EU will send an election observer mission were continuing in mid-July.

The SADC Electoral Advisory Council (SEAC) and African Union (AU) delegations are already in the country evaluating preparations for the elections. Interior minister Eugenio Laborinho spoke following meetings with delegations from both parties, stating that learnings from previous elections had been made and security provisions safeguarded.

There have been calls from all parties to avoid anti-democratic means, however some critics have questioned their commitment after protests for transparent elections in May were met with the arrest of 7 activists. Angola's general election will take place on 23rd August 2017. The largest opposition party UNITA have expressed some concern about the support in the state media for the ruling Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA).

What will be the election outcome?

These elections are historic. They are the first in Angola's history in which José Eduardo dos Santos is not the candidate for president. Whatever the outcome one thing is certain. Angola will have a new president. Some observers think that by offering both change and continuity the MPLA will secure a comfortable victory. They got 72% at the last election. The MPLA presidential candidate, João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, who is the current Minister of Defence will want to secure a similar majority as a form of mandate. Some analysts have suggested that with the economy in crisis and increasing dissatisfaction with high levels of poverty and inequality the opposition may do better than at the last election possibly reducing the MPLA majority below two thirds. Most however, are agreed that the likely outcome is an MPLA win, probably with a comfortable majority. If that transpires it is questionable whether the new president will make significant changes, or whether, beyond the identity of the new leader, there will be any change at all.

José Eduardo dos Santos will still be present within Angolan politics after the next elections. Despite stepping down as the nation's president he is remaining as President of the MPLA, although there are increasing rumours about his health. It is not clear if dos Santos will hold party positions post-election as a temporary, transitional arrangement for up to a year. If longer he may be an active, even interventionist, former president of the country. Dos Santos' eldest son is head of Angola's sovereign wealth fund and his daughter is head of the state oil company Sonangol

Angola in 'third stage' of democratic state formation

Angola is entering its third stage in state formation, the Minister of Justice and Human Rights, Rui Manguiera proclaimed in a lecture on justice and law in democratic state-building. Speaking as part of an initiative organised by the Tocoist Polytechnic Higher Education Institute Maguiera stated that the first stage of state formation took place from national independence in 1975 to 1991 and was marked by a socialist regime in which the Angolan state embraced all responsibilities. The second, from 1991 to 2010, saw the opening of the political system which permitted the emergence of other political parties. The third which the country is currently enjoying, he stated, was marked by the approval of a New Constitution. According to Maguiera the justice system had to adjust to each phase, but the rule of law and democratic state is becoming increasingly consolidated and there is justice and law reform underway. Critics have remained sceptical of Angola's justice programme following allegations of state corruption and the arrests of several journalists and activists in the run up to August's election.

Critics accuse MPLA of seeking life-long immunity for Dos Santos

There has been criticism from opposition parties over the special provisions that the ruling party the MPLA has attempted to introduce for Angolan president José Eduardo Dos Santos following his departure from office after the next election. Whilst it is customary for former presidents to enjoy certain privileges after stepping down as leader of the country, concern was expressed by opposition parties as the MPLA attempted to change the benefits afforded to former heads of state. A draft organic law published in The Official Journal in early June triggered the controversy. Key elements included special legal status of 'President of the Republic Emeritus Honorary' which would mean Dos Santos could only be judged before a special tribunal for any crimes committed during time spent in office whilst carrying out presidential duties. A further provision absolved the president of responsibility for acts committed in the course of duties. Amongst the other items detailed in the draft law included the increase of remuneration to the equivalent of 90% of his current salary of just over \$6200/month, the provision of security guards and chauffeur-driven cars and a substantial salary for the first lady. However as the proposal was taken to parliament, the expressions "President Emeritus" and "Special Trial Court" were reportedly dropped from the draft law. Dos Santos, who has been President since 1979 announced in February that he would be stepping down as president of the country following the forthcoming August elections.

DRC elections increasingly unlikely in 2017?

Elections were due to be held in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in November 2016. (Angola Monitor 1:2017). They were postponed. Angola, which chairs the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and has intervened several times in the DRC, said it supported the

postponement “by a few months”. Halfway through 2017 there is no sign that elections will be held this year. The President, who has exceeded his two terms allowed under the constitution, named a new Prime Minister in May. In July the head of the electoral commission was quoted as saying he did not think it would be possible to hold the presidential election by December 2017. Angola in the past has supported President Kabila but is believed to think he now must stand down in accordance with the constitution. Some believe that Kabila is acting tactically, delaying the election under the presumption that with Angola focussed on its own elections it will not intervene again in the DRC. President Kabila is barred by the constitution from standing for a third term and by the agreement reached at the end of 2016 postponing elections, from seeking to change the constitution. There are approximately four million people displaced in the DRC. One million of these are from Kasai province that borders north east Angola. The province has witnessed an eruption in violence after clashes between state security forces and traditional leaders since August 2016. The catalyst was the killing of Kamuina Nsapu, the heir to a chieftaincy. In the past three months it is estimated more than 30,000 DRC citizens have fled to Lunda Norte province in Angola to escape the conflict (see Aid & Development News, this issue).

Economic news

Luanda tops world’s most expensive cities once again for an expatriate

Luanda has regained its title of the world’s most expensive cities to live for expatriates according to consultancy firm Mercer’s annual cost of living survey. Last year the city dropped to second place in the leader board for most costly metropolis, a change many attributed to depreciated oil prices and the weakening of local currency. However it has regained its title this year, despite the weakening of the Angolan currency the Kwanza against the US dollar. According to the World Economic Forum the costly nature of living in Angola is partially due to the standard of accommodation typically sought by expatriates, which is in limited supply and thus more expensive. In addition to housing costs the survey also takes into consideration entertainment, food, clothes and transport reviewing the cost of a wide range of items in each city from a cup of coffee, to a litre of petrol and a pair of jeans.

Economic diversification: Moving beyond a rhetorical commitment?

The diversification of the Angolan economy has been a prominent topic for all parties in the run up to the election. Over the last few months the ruling MPLA’s presidential candidate João Lourenco has stressed the need to diversify the economy, through private investment and agricultural development as well as building human capital and thus reducing reliance on skilled expatriates. The MPLA’s commitment to diversifying the oil centric economy has been questioned by members of the opposition. A senior advisor to the president of opposition party Convergência Ampla Salvação de Angola – Coligação Eleitoral (CASA-CE), Carlos Tiago Kandada has argued that the opposition have long been insisting on economic diversification which the government resisted during the oil boom. Speaking on behalf of the party via video link at the Angola Forum conference in London’s Chatham House, Kandada also stated he fervently supported heavy investment in agriculture. Vice president of UNITA, Raul Manuel Danda, speaking at the same conference also cited investment in agriculture as a top priority for his party. According to the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) approximately 45% of Angola’s GDP and around 95% of exports are owing to its oil production. There has been rhetorical commitment to economic diversification for some time, in 2016 Angola suffered a profound recession and some senior economists have argued that as a result diversification was put on the backburner in place of stabilization. But 15 years on from the end of Angola’s civil war and with oil prices beginning to stabilize commentators are questioning when Angola’s politicians will shift the country’s economic stance from crisis management and stabilization to development.

Public sector pay set to increase by up to 15%

The Finance Minister announced that public sector pay will increase by 15% in 2017. No further details were given. Teachers went on strike earlier this year. Inflation peaked at approximately 40% at end of

2016, but is still over 30%. It is thought the government does not want large scale labour unrest in the run up to the national election on 23 August.

Emirates ends strategic partnership with TAAG

Emirates airlines has ended its 10 year strategic partnership with Angolan state airline, TAAG Linhas Aéreas de Angola E.P (TAAG) after two years. Under the partnership Emirates were advising TAAG to assist it to become profitable. Emirates cut its flights from Dubai to Luanda from five per week, to three per week. At one stage they were daily. It is reported that the catalyst for the cancellation, which was implemented with immediate effect was Emirates' increasing frustration at the failure to get a reported several hundred millions of dollars of sales revenue repatriated. The issue of getting funds owed to businesses out of Angola has been an issue for many years. Investors hoped it would become easier but with shortages of the dollar and liquidity issues it seems not to have eased and may have become harder. Angola is ranked 182 out of 190 countries for ease of doing business by the World Bank.

Human rights news

Journalists charged with crimes against state

Two Angolan journalists have been charged with crimes against the state in relation to an article that detailed the alleged illegal acquisition of public land by the Angolan General Public Prosecutor. The article was initially published by the investigative journalist and editor of online anti-corruption magazine Maka Angola, Rafael Marques de Morais in November 2016. Journalist and editor of Angolan newspaper O Crime, Mariano Brás Lourenco then republished the article adding personal commentary. Subsequently both men were charged with 'defamation of a public authority' and 'outrage to a sovereign body'. The crimes carry a maximum penalty of incarceration for one and three years respectively, with the latter classified as a crime against the state. The article, entitled 'Angola's Lawless Lawmen' alleged that the attorney general, João Maria de Sousa had purchased land as a real estate investor in the Kwanza-Sul province. The purchase, de Morais argues, is in direct contradiction to constitutional safeguards that stipulate those involved in the administration of justice are prohibited from any other commercial activity. (The only exception being academic research or teaching of Jurisprudence.)

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) have criticised the Angolan government for penalising the publishing of an article on an issue of national interest, whilst the Angolan Union of Journalists called the law, 'a political tool to intimidate the press'. Since the announcement of the charges Amnesty International has also released a statement announcing they consider the charges to be politically motivated and part of a government tactic to discourage other critics. Bras Lourenco has expressed that he believes the intended outcome of the charges is to demand crippling compensation from the newspaper that will result in its closure.

Reports of lethal violence in diamond region

There have been reports of violence against peaceful protest marches in the Lunda Norte province in Northern Angola. Police allegedly fired multiple rounds at a peaceful demonstration of Tchokwe separatists as they marched from the town of Luzamba to the nearby capital of the region, Cuango. The protestors were marching to secure a degree of autonomy for the Tchokwé people who inhabit the former kingdom of Lundas. Reports state there was one fatality who was uninvolved in the protest. According to an Angolan news source the march was organised by banned organisation the Movimento do Protectorado Lunda-Tchokwé (MPL-T). The organisation sought authorisation from the president for the demonstration and did not receive a permit, however chose to go ahead with the march regardless. A second unauthorised protest was carried out by the same organisation in the town of Cafunfo in the same province. There are reports that this march, which featured several hundred participants, also came under fire from the police. The MPLA has commented they gave no orders to shoot at protestors and if individual officers were found to have opened fire there would be legal consequences.

Angolan Manuela Maria Teresa elected AU Commissioner for Human and People's Rights

Manuela Maria Teresa recently competed with 5 other candidates to secure the position of Commissioner for Human and People's Rights in the African Union. Maria Teresa won the first round of voting with 49 votes. She is the second Angolan to be appointed to the Executive Board of the African Union (AU) this year. The first, Josefa Sacko, was elected as Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Economy in January.

Aid and development news

Angola receives over 30,000 refugees from DRC since April

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has reaffirmed through a representative in Angola their support to the refugees from Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Angola has experienced a large influx of refugees to its Lunda Norte province seeking refuge from the resurgence of conflict in the Kasai region in the Democratic Republic of Congo. According to Relief Web 30,000 refugees have arrived to Lunda Norte since April and an urgent appeal has been launched. In early June the UNHCR appealed for a contribution of \$65million to support the refugees. Angolan Welfare minister Goncalves Muandumba has stated the complex nature of the vast inflow of refugees and has called for all actors to 'step up efforts to contribute to stability in DRC'. A separate statement from UNHCR's Director for the Africa Bureau, Valentin Tapsoba has praised Angola for its 'warm welcome' but has stated that reception centres are full beyond their capacity. It is estimated that refugees continue to arrive at a rate of 100 a day.

The UN Human Rights Council agreed on 23 June to request a team of international experts, including experts from the region be sent to Kasai to investigate alleged human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law.

Ministers attend National Demining Conference in Angola

The National Demining conference was held in Luanda last month, under the motto "Angola free of land mines, towards development". The conference was attended by more than 200 delegates from the country's 18 provinces as well as international guests. Conference participants praised the efforts of the Angolan government and its international partners stating that from 1995 – 2017 over 3.4 billion square meters of land were demined. However Social Welfare minister Gonçalves Muandumba stressed the ongoing nature of the programme and called on national and international partners to help in demining in the country. Muandumba stated an additional USD\$200 million will be required to meet the provisions of the Ottawa Treaty, achieving landmine free status by 2025. Currently the largest international funder for land mine clearance in Angola is the United States, however this is expected to decrease as the new USA administration reduces its aid budget. Other donors include Norway who have donated USD\$400,000 to demining operations over the course of 2016 according to the deputy national director of Norwegian People's Aid (APN). The UK does not currently provide direct aid to Angola, having terminated its £2million mine action programme in 2011. However, following a renewed pledge of £100 million in UK funding for land mine clearance globally there have been some calls for a review on the provision of land mine support to Angola.

Angola at Women Leaders Forum for Africa's Transformation

Angolan minister of Family and Women Promotion, Filomena Delgado represented Angola at the High Level Panel Women Leaders Forum for Africa's Transformation in New York. The three day forum held at the UN headquarters launched the African Women Leaders Network, an initiative that seeks to enhance women's leadership in the transformation of Africa, with a focus on peace, governance and stability. The meeting took place from 31st May – 2nd June and was attended by 80 participants from Africa and the diaspora, including female leaders from politics and the public sector, business, media and civil society. According to UN Women the meeting concluded with 'a strong roadmap' of the African

Women Leaders Network. Strategies for the network include utilising peer learning and mentoring to enhance women's leadership in Africa. Based on the nation's parliament Angola boasts a relatively high level of female political leaders with 36.8% of Angola's parliament made up by women, ranking it 19th in the world according to Women Political Leaders Global Forum. South Africa leads the way in the region, ranking 10th with 40.8% of the national assembly comprised by women. The United Kingdom parliament and United States congress rank 48th and 85th respectively.

Second power station of Cambambe State inaugurated

The Vice President of Angola Manuel Vicente has inaugurated the second power station at the Cambambe Hydroelectric Dam in the northern Cuanza province. The first power station originally built in the 1960s has undergone modernization to increase its productivity, alongside the construction of a secondary facility featuring 4 generators. This edition has taken the dams total production capacity up to 960 megawatts. The project is said to have cost an estimated \$2 billion, and has employed tens of thousands of workers of whom national news sources state are comprised of 80% nationals. Acting on behalf of President José Eduardo dos Santos, as part of the inauguration the Vice President also delivered house hold appliances including fridges, freezers and sound equipment to 30 traditional authorities and members of civil society.

Mbanza Kongo awarded World Heritage Status

The Historic Center of the City of Mbanza Kongo in Angola's northern Zaire Province has been awarded World Heritage status. The city, founded in the 13th century, is regarded as the political and spiritual capital of the ancient Kingdom of Kongo, one of the largest states in southern and western Africa from 14th to 19th century. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Mbanza Kongo 'illustrates, more than anywhere in sub-Saharan Africa, the profound changes caused by the introduction of Christianity and the arrival of the Portuguese into Central Africa'. Angola was one of three cultural sites in Africa to be awarded World Heritage status in July 2017, the others being Asmara in Eritrea and Khomani Cultural Landscape in South Africa.

The articles in the Angola Monitor do not necessarily represent any agreed position of ACTSA itself.