
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).

This issue covers the appointment of Manuel Vicente as Minister for Economic Co-ordination, the controversial reappointment of the head of the MPLA's women's movement to head the Electoral Commission, 10 years of peace, the increase in construction projects ahead of elections later this year and the completion of the IMF's standby agreement and continuing discrepancy in Sonangol accounts. We also cover the continued violent response to anti government protests, police raids of the Folha 8 newspaper, Angola government and civil society groups report to the Africa Human Rights Commission and the continued droughts.

This issue is also available in Portuguese.

We welcome readers' responses to the Angola Monitor. Please send your comments to campaigns@actsa.org. For more news and information on Angola and southern Africa visit the ACTSA website www.actsa.org.

Political news

Former Sonangol head appointed government minister

Manuel Vicente, former head of the state oil company Sonangol, was appointed as Minister of State for Economic Co-ordination by President dos Santos on 30 January. The new role will give Manuel Vicente significant powers in formulating and implementing economic policy, reporting directly to the President. He will also be in charge of Angola's bilateral commissions with a number of countries including major trade partners Brazil and China. Francisco de Lemos Jose Maria, Sonangol's chief financial officer has been promoted to head the company.

The move comes after months of speculation that the president was lining up Manuel Vicente to succeed him. Markus Weimer from international think tank Chatham House said "Vicente should not be discounted as a possible candidate for the succession. He is very close to the president, an ally who the president trusts...The fact that top positions in Dos Santos' inner circle are being changed in the run up to an election doesn't surprise me..."

Whilst Jose Eduardo dos Santos is expected to lead the ruling party Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA) into the elections, due later this year, there are rumours that he might step down soon afterwards. Since direct presidential election were replaced in 2010 with the head of state chosen from the top of the list of the party with most seats in parliament, the race for the number two position on the MPLA list has become all the more important. Although Vicente is thought to be the president's first choice, he has not been a senior member of the MPLA for long, having joined the party's powerful politburo in 2009. The current Vice President Fernando da Piedade Dias dos Santos is considered to be the favoured candidate of party members to continue in the number two position.

MPLA member reappointed to head electoral commission

Suzana Ingles, head of the MPLA's women's movement, has been reappointed as head of National Electoral Commission (NEC). Opposition parties, including UNITA, have raised concerns about her appointment, questioning Ingles impartiality due to her close ties with the MPLA and President dos Santos. Opposition parties

have argued that Ingles' re-appointment violates electoral law as she is a lawyer and not a magistrate court judge. Suzana Ingles has pledged that the next elections will take place in a "fair and transparent manner."

Ex UNITA parliamentary leader to head new party

UNITA's former parliamentary party leader Abel Chivukuvuku has announced his resignation from the party to lead the Convergencia Ampla de Salvacao de Angola (CASA). He told a press conference "I Abel Chivukuvuku, activist in Unita for 38 years, with regret, but also with much determination, I am forced to consciously tread a new path. Thus I cease as from today, March 14, 2012, my activism in UNITA." His announcement follows growing tensions in UNITA after the re-election of Isaias Samukuva in December as party leader for another four year term. Chivukuvuku is expected to attract a number of followers in UNITA with him to CASA. The establishment of a new political party so close to the election is unlikely to have any major impact on the outcome of the election as it is expected to split the opposition vote.

Angola: Celebrating 10 years of peace

That was the title of the Chatham House Angola Forum in April. Contributors provided a range of inputs, one commenting it feels like marking 10 years of independence although Angola has been independent for 37 years. The contributions provided contrasting views. The Angolan Ambassador to the UK talked of the improvements, socially and economically and urged business to invest in Angola. Other contributors mentioned recent protests which though small were seen as potentially significant. Also perceived as significant was the clampdown on those protesting. References were made to the 87 per cent turnout in the 2008 elections and that most Angolans feel things are improving. Angola's GDP is growing at one of the fastest rates in the world but is Angola increasingly dependant on oil? Is the economic growth sustainable? Is it reducing poverty and gross inequality? Most contributors viewed the development model Angola is following as central state planned with the priority on infrastructure improvement. Is freedom of expression and organisation being more or less tolerated? Are people feeling included or marginalised? The summary is perhaps the paradox of Angola; it has come a long way and things have changed, in some areas remarkably, yet the creation of independent Angola, the long and destructive war, how it ended and the reliance on oil still provide much of the context of Angola today. Papers presented at the conference and a podcast are available at: <http://bit.ly/Angola10>

President dos Santos marked the 10th anniversary of the end of its civil war by unveiling a monument, featuring a white dove being released, near to the site where UNITA chief Jonas Savimbi was killed in Luena in 2002. Following Savimbi's death a peace deal was signed on April 4 2002. Human rights organisations used the anniversary to reflect on progress and challenges of the last decade. Angola country director at the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) Elias Isaac said "There has been economic growth, but in terms of democracy, human rights and social development, the country has gone backwards."

Economic news

Construction and investment increases ahead of elections

Foreign investors have benefitted from a rush to award construction contracts ahead of elections, planned for later this year. Chinese company SinoHydro and Brazil's Odebrecht have been awarded contracts worth US\$200 million for water and sanitation projects in the provinces of Malange and Kwanza Sul as part of the 2007 Water for All Scheme, which committed the government to providing water supplies to 80 per cent of rural communities.

The China Tiesiju Civil Engineering Group, a subsidiary of the China Railway Engineering Corporation, has won the contract to rebuild the new Luanda General Hospital. The new hospital is expected to be completed by 2014 and will be able to accommodate twice as many patients as the previous hospital

which was deemed unsafe in 2010. The original Luanda General Hospital was opened in 2006 and was built and equipped by the China Overseas Engineering Group Company, also a subsidiary of the China Railway Engineering Corporation.

Angola is to develop its telecommunications network with the announcement of a major investment by Africa's largest phone operator, Movitel and Chinese telecommunications company ZTE. The project will involve the development of a LTE or 4G network in Angola, the most advance telecommunications technology currently available. The investment will put Angola ahead of most of Europe and parts of the US. ZTE is providing all the equipment and financing a \$1billion upgrade to the entire Movitel system. The operator is expecting to have a million 4G customers by the end of 2012.

Angola Cables and Brazilian state-owned telecommunications provider Telebras have signed an agreement to lay a 6,000 km submarine cable linking Fortaleza in Brasil to Luanda. Telebras aims for the cable to be operational by 2014 to improve data traffic during the FIFA World Cup in Brasil. The new cable will reduce the cost of internet access in Africa and South America as data traffic will no longer have to pass through Europe and the U.S. Whilst the size of the investment has not been announced, the cost is estimated to be approximately U.S. \$140-200 million. The cable construction should take about eighteen months.

The recently established state agricultural agency Mecanegro has secured a loan of US\$40million from Chinese Bank Exim in a move to encourage modern farming methods and increase agricultural production. The programme will create rural engineering teams, train staff and pay for the acquisition of technical equipment. Mecanegro aims to mechanise 100,000 hectares of agricultural land in 2012, prioritising areas with high agricultural potential such as Malanje, Huambo, Huíla and Kwanza Sul.

Angola and Russia have increased their economic links, signing protocols on increasing bilateral co-operation including in technology, mining and civil aviation at the Second Session of the Angola/Russia Inter-governmental Commission for Economic Cooperation in March. Although the two countries have strong historical links, Russia is a comparatively small player in the Angolan economy, with trade in the first half of 2011 amounting to just US\$28m.

Angola successfully completes IMF Stand-By Arrangement

The IMF visited Angola in January to conduct its final review of its US\$1.4bn Stand-By Arrangement, and approve the final loan disbursement of about US\$133.6 million. The arrangement originally expired in February but was extended to March to allow time for the final review. Following the review Min Zhu, the IMF's Deputy Managing Director and Acting Chair said, "The Angolan authorities should be commended for successfully completing the Stand-By Arrangement and achieving their overarching objective of restoring macroeconomic stability." The IMF expects Angola's economy to grow by 9.7 per cent this year.

Still 4.2 billion discrepancy in Sonangol accounts

Human Rights Watch have called on the IMF to withhold its \$130million loan until the Angolan government publicly justifies the US\$32bn discrepancy in its accounts from 2007-2010, linked to the state oil company, Sonangol. Human Rights Watch and Revenue Watch acknowledged that while the Angolan Government has taken some steps to improve transparency and management of its oil sector in recent years but say the IMF should press the government to increase accountability for its use of public funds and monitor public spending better. The government has explained that the problem is due to insufficient record keeping for Sonangol spending. On 10 May the IMF said "So far, the authorities have identified \$27.2 billion of the total residual of \$31.4 billion. This leaves an amount of US\$4.2 billion still to be explained." The US\$31.4bn amount is the equivalent of about 25 per cent of the country's GDP in 2011.

Government pledges support for business

The government has promised to boost the private sector by investing US\$1.8 billion to create and support small and medium sized businesses in a bid to create jobs and reduce the country's dependence on revenue from oil. The scheme will provide credit and establish business advice centres offering training and support. It is not yet known how the scheme will function. President dos Santos said "The State has a large presence in the economy and we plan for more Angolans to become entrepreneurs, to start good businesses, create jobs and contribute to national development."

Government plans to merge rail companies

Angola's three major rail companies, Caminho de Ferro de Benguela (CFB), Caminhos de Ferro de Luanda (CFL) and Caminho de Ferro de Mocamedes (CFM) are expected to be merged into a single company, Caminhos de Ferro de Angola (CFA) in preparation for the partial privatisation of the system. The government is expected to retain a controlling stake in the system whilst selling off the commercial and operational aspects to private companies.

In the last ten years the government has rebuilt all major railways. A new line between Namibe and Menongue is expected to be fully operational in July after six years of reconstruction and a rail line between Lobito and Luau is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

Air travel expansion takes off

State airline Linhas Aereas de Angola (TAAG) announced in February its plans to increase its fleet of Boeing 737-200s and that it would add a second weekly flight to Beijing. At the beginning of April Boeing announced that it had received an order for three of the aircraft, a deal worth \$895 million at list prices.

The national airport management company Empresa Nacional de Exploracao de Aeroportos e Navegacao Aérea (ENANA), has announced plans to modernise nine airports in 2012, in response to the growing international interest in trade with the country.

In April the Sao Tome and Principe government announced that Sonangol's airline Sonair was to take a controlling stake (51 per cent) in the country's STP Airways. The announcement follows the signing of a 30 year contract between Sonangol and the Sao Tome and Principe government, last year, to run the nation's sea and airports.

Human rights news

Anti-government protests spark police violence

The youth group Central 7311 held a protest in Luanda on March 10 to object to the reappointment of Suzana Ingles as president of the National Electoral Commission (NEC) and call for the resignation of President dos Santos. Before the march had begun several organisers as well as the secretary-general of Bloco Democratico, a small opposition party, were attacked by unknown men. Although there was a heavy police presence there was no intervention. On March 11 a previously unknown group 'Citizens for peace' claimed responsibility for the attack, saying it was defending Angola against 'undemocratic elements'. Protest organisers were also subjected to intimidation and harassment ahead of the action, one protest leader's home was raided, whilst two others were abducted. Interior Minister Sebastião Martins has denied any police involvement in the violence and the police have launched an investigation; so far no arrests have been made. The violence against unarmed protesters and intimidation against Central 7311 have been condemned by international rights groups.

Anti-government protests and demonstrations, demanding economic, social and democratic rights have increased over the past few months, particularly in Luanda and protestors have repeatedly come under attack from the police. Protests on 27 January and 3 February in the capital were also violently attacked. In Benguela three protestors were arrested on 10 March after police dispersed a peaceful demonstration

of about 60 individuals. They were sentenced to 45 days in prison for disobedience and aggression against the police, but later released on bail.

In Cabinda city on 4 February police arrested 21 striking health workers who were calling for improvements to their working conditions. The workers had gathered outside their union offices after being forced from outside their hospital. Police deployed water cannons and dogs and attacked the workers. The 21 were released later that day without formal charges.

The 2010 constitution guarantees freedom of assembly and peaceful demonstration, and Angolan laws allow public demonstrations without government authorisation. However, since 2009 the government has banned or obstructed a number of anti-government demonstrations, and the police have prevented the majority of peaceful demonstrations from taking place. Since January, five anti-government rallies have been banned and at least 46 protestors have been arrested, 11 of whom have been sentenced to prison terms of up to 90 days. The government has responded to the growing criticism by using prominent figures to condemn the protestors and government run media has accused external powers of attempting to meddle in Angola's affairs.

Leslie Lefkow, Human Rights Watch deputy Africa director said "The increasing violence against protesters, observers and opposition politicians signals a deteriorating rights environment ahead of the upcoming parliamentary elections. Human rights organisations have long accused the Angolan government of avoiding public scrutiny, and repressing protest and dissent.

Police raid critical newspaper

The offices of weekly newspaper Folha 8 were raided by police on 12 March, following the publication of a photo montage depicting President dos Santos, Vice President Fernando Piedade Dias dos Santos, and General Manuel Helder Vieira Dias Junior Kopelipa as thieves in a police line-up. About 15 police officers from the National Directorate of Criminal Investigations raided the office and seized equipment including 20 computers under a warrant investigating 'Crimes of outrage against the state'.

Mohamed Keita, Africa Advocacy coordinator for the Committee to Protect Journalists said "The seizure of Folha 8's computers is a crude act of censorship meant to silence one of the few remaining independent news outlets in Angola."

Folha 8 is one of two independent newspapers in Angola. It was established in 1995. It has repeatedly been attacked by the authorities including raids and charges. Its supporters believe this is because of its criticisms of government.

Fernando Baxi, the paper's managing director said "The current government in Angola wants to muzzle our weekly by seizing our equipment...But we are determined to press on with our fight to consolidate democracy in our country through our publications...Folha 8 will hit the stands this weekend." The paper's editor William Tonet was sentenced in October to a year in prison or a fine of \$100,000 for articles defaming senior government officials, but has filed an appeal with the Supreme Court.

Angola reports to African Human Rights Commission

Angola reported to the 51st Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) at the end of April. Human rights organisations gave evidence to the Commission calling on the government to do more to protect and promote rights.

Amnesty International's submission said the organisation was "concerned that Angola has failed to comply with its human rights obligations in terms of the African Charter by carrying out and allowing human rights violations within its territory." It noted in particular the right to security of the individual, right to information and freedom of expression, and the right to freedom of assembly. Amnesty also noted that the government has violated and continues to violate rights to property, health, and protection of the family. The Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) said that Angolans lack the right to

freedom of assembly and expression and called on the government to ensure that Angolans can exercise the civil and political rights enshrined in the Constitution.

Civil society call for freedom of association in Cabinda

Six civil society organisations marked the eighth anniversary of the establishment of human rights organisation Mpalabanda on 14 March, with a call for fundamental freedoms to be respected by Cabinda's authorities. Mpalabanda was banned by the Provincial Court of Cabinda in 2006, accused of inciting violence. Six years on the judicial authorities have continued to refuse to hear the human rights organisation's appeal against the ban.

The statement signed by ACAT France, Associação Construindo Comunidades, CIVICUS, Front Line Defenders, OMUNGA and SOS Habitat calls on the Angolan authorities to hear the appeal lodged by Mpalabanda in 2006, to respect the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and respect the role of human rights defenders.

Visas granted to human rights delegates

Visas were finally granted in January to Amnesty International delegates to conduct human rights research in the country. Amnesty International and other international human rights organisations have been unable to obtain visas to travel to Angola since 2008. In August last year the government refused entry visas to civil society leaders from the region planning to attend events during the August SADC heads of state summit.

UNDP sign Human Rights Aid Accords

In May, the Angolan State Department for Human Rights and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in Luanda signed an agreement for support to help the government bring domestic laws in line with international and regional standards for human rights. The US\$1.1 million project for 2012-2013 will develop the capacity of the government's department for human rights and associated departments as well as civil society's capacity to monitor human rights and the implementation of the law.

Aid and development news

Drought continues hit Angola's farms

Production on farms in central and southern Angola has been hit by an absence of rainfall since December 2011. The extended dry season, which normally lasts for three weeks in December, has led to drought, affecting food production in a number of areas particularly Benguela, Huambo, Bie and Huila. In March drought destroyed over 30,000 hectares of cereal crops in Caimbambo Municipality, Benguela Province. Global risk consultancy Maplecroft last year ranked Angola as fifth in the world for unstable food supplies.

New institutions increase access to higher education

The Cabinet have approved the creation of 15 new private higher education institutions in the provinces of Luanda, Benguela, Cabinda, Huila, Huambo, Uige, Kwanza Norte, Kwanza Sul, Bengo and Bie provinces. 19,000 new students will have access to higher education in 2012.

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