

Angola Monitor

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Angola Monitor covers the politics, economics, development, democracy and human rights of Angola. It is published quarterly by ACTSA.

This issue looks at the participation of Angola in the G8 Summit in Italy. We also highlight the renewed relationship between Angola and Russia, marked by the visit of President Medvedev to Luanda. The Human Rights section looks at the critical report published by Human Rights Watch on Angola, while the Aid and Development section focuses on the government's prioritisation of the agriculture and education sectors praised by international organisations.

We welcome readers' responses to the Angola Monitor. Please send your comments to campaigns@actsa.org

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Political and economic news

First G8 Summit participation a success for Angola

The presence of Angola at the G8 in L'Aquila (Italy) showed the country's growing importance as pointed out by the European Commission (EC) president, Durão Barroso. This was the first time Angola has taken part in an event of this kind. Angola was invited to the G8 Summit mainly because of its chairmanship of the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), but also because of its high economic growth rates. According to Angola's official statistics, the past few years have witnessed an average of two-digit growth of its gross domestic product (GDP), with the per-capita GDP increasing to over US\$3,000 in 2008, hitting an all time high.

Financial aid and economic development in Africa were among the issues addressed at the meeting and it was a "very important opportunity for Angola to be assisted in diversifying its economic and relaunch itself," US Ambassador in Angola Dan Mozena said. According to Luanda University lecturer Hermenegildo Bento, since Angola has a budget that mostly depends on crude oil, it is necessary to start diversifying the sources of income and the participation in the G8 might enable Angola to attract new partners for a greater diversification of its economy.

The country was represented in Italy by President José Eduardo dos Santos: "I think we can work around two axis, the first being that of keeping the minimum food and medicine reserves for emergency and humanitarian support to needy people". He argued that food security is one of the principal concerns of the African continent, due to its implications for health, productivity, social and political stability and economic growth. The Angolan president also said that there was a consensus on the need for improved mechanisms for regulation and supervision of central banks and strengthened cooperation among them, adding he hopes Africa will take an active part in the process to create a new order and a major democratisation of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). At the same time, Dos Santos said that "we would like to ask for re-negotiations of the external debt to the Paris Club, which constitutes a heavy burden to the least developed, with guarantees of the principle of long moratoria in the refund of the capital and interests."

Angola economy to keep growing?

Angola's economy is expected to grow by between 1 and 3.3 percent in 2009 as oil prices recover, according to a study by the Catholic University of Luanda.

The study is based on an oil price of \$70 per barrel. Angola depends on oil for over 90 percent of its income.

The IMF and OECD, however, predict Angola's economy will contract in 2009 for the first time

According to the Angolan minister of Economy, Manuel Nunes Júnior, the participation of Angola in the G8 Summit in Italy represented “significant gains” for the country. “It is not only Angola that gains from this summit. I think that the African continent as a whole might be considered as privileged” He said. “Today’s Africa is not the same as that of 20 years ago, (...) there are new leaderships, new desires and there is a need to enter a new era of responsibilities. We need to be optimistic that the continent will succeed”.

Medvedev brings Russia back to Angola

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev visited Angola at the end of June, after stops in Egypt, Nigeria and Namibia to hold talks on closer coordination of oil policy with OPEC. During his visit, the first to the country by a Russian head of state, Medvedev said that cooperation with OPEC is “particularly important in the current situation, when the oil market is going through serious changes.”

After a bilateral meeting with President dos Santos, Medvedev told reporters that Russian state-oil company Zarubezhneft and Angolan state-run oil firm Sonangol were in talks to explore for hydrocarbon deposits, stressing they “also discussed cooperation in other areas [to] realise projects that are worthy of the new age.” The two countries signed six agreements to cooperate in several economic sectors in order to increase trade between them, which stood at \$76 million in 2008. Two of the main projects are a \$300 million Russian loan from Vneshekonombank, VTB Group and Roseximbank to improve Angola's telecommunications and the construction of two major dams on the Kwanza River.

Dos Santos, who speaks fluent Russian having studied in the former Soviet Union, told reporters he hopes the signing of these agreements will “bolster ties” between the two nations. He said, “It was very impressive the way the Russian leader talked about African matters, revealing not only the knowledge but also his vision and personal engagement in seeking solutions and contributions to improve the security situation in our continent”. The relationship between Moscow and Luanda has deep roots stretching back to the 1970s when Angola’s ruling party, the MPLA, was backed by the Soviet Union and Cuba while the United States and apartheid-South Africa supported rebels from UNITA. During the Cold War, Russian military advisers were sent to Angola and Angola’s military officials were trained in Moscow to help the MPLA win the long civil war that badly damaged the country for three decades.

Links between the two nations weakened in the 1990s but are now strengthening again since Russia is the world’s biggest oil producer and Angola’s oil production has soared since the end of the civil war in 2002. Medvedev’s visit to Angola marked a new historical high level of bilateral cooperation in various sectors between Angola and Russia.

Elections likely to be delayed

Following last September’s parliamentary elections, it was widely assumed there would be presidential elections in 2009. The MPLA government and the incumbent President, dos Santos, then announced a Constitutional Commission to re-draft the Constitution first. This led to some speculation that there might be a change to allow Parliament to elect the President – and with an 85 percent MPLA majority, a foregone conclusion.

On 16 July, however, the MPLA presented its proposals to the Constitutional Commission. These support (Article 90) broadly the current constitutional system of universal direct secret and periodical suffrage, under the two-round system for presidential elections. The problem however seems to be the slowness of the process with a proposal to extend the deadline for the work of the Constitutional Commission, due to finish in September, for a further 180 days, meaning presidential elections would not take place until 2010. A decision on the constitutional timetable may be announced at the Commission’s meeting on July 28.

Dubai and Angola to strengthen diamond ties

Dubai Multi Commodities Centre (DMCC) announced on June 28 that it has begun exploring opportunities to strengthen ties with Angola in the area of diamond trade.

Dubai and Angola are in the preliminary stage of outlining areas for cooperation to increase rough diamond trade volumes, in addition to other initiatives that can benefit the entire value chain of the diamond industry. A delegation from Angola has been invited to visit Dubai to formalise the framework for future initiatives between the two governments.

"In this era of globalisation, the increasing economic integration between the Middle East and Africa is important for our shared growth," said Ahmed Bin Sulayem, Executive Chairman of DMCC. "The diamond trade between both regions, in particular, represents our complementary strengths. We hope to cooperate more closely to promote growth and transparency of the diamond trade and to create long-term sustainable benefits for both Angola and Dubai."

Human rights news

Human Rights Watch calls for human rights violations to stop

Human Rights Watch (HRW) has criticised the Angolan government in a recent report, 'They Put Me in the Hole: Military Detention, Torture, and Lack of Due Process in Cabinda.' The document highlights the human rights violations it alleges are committed by the Angolan armed forces and state intelligence officials and urges Angola to end immediately the unlawful detention and torture of people suspected of rebel activities in the oil-rich province of Cabinda.

Georgette Gagnon, Africa Director at HRW, claims "the Angolan armed forces are committing serious human violations in Cabinda", stressing that "Angola's security concerns do not justify torturing people or denying them their most basic rights." In particular, the report, which is based on interviews with 20 detainees at the civilian prison at Yabi in Cabinda and other sources, shows that at least 38 people were arbitrarily arrested by the military in Cabinda and accused of state security crimes, between September 2007 and March 2009. Those detained were charged with state security crimes for alleged involvement in armed attacks attributed to the Liberation Front of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC), a separatist guerrilla movement. One of the detainees told how he was tied up and put in a hole full of water, while another said he cried in pain when the military beat and tortured him, telling him to "say the truth".

The report said that confessions obtained under torture were used as evidence during judicial proceedings and calls on the Government to drop all cases brought against citizens based on unlawful confessions and investigate all allegations of human rights violations by members of the military and intelligence services.

Women are the right choice

Angolan minister of Family and Women Promotion, Genoveva Lino, has urged society to invest in women for poverty reduction.

The government official spoke at an event marking World Population Day on July 11, which was jointly organised by the ministries of Planning, Family and Health under the motto 'Investing in women as much as in men is the right choice'.

Minister Lino urged all public institutions, churches, civil society and the United Nations to invest in women as much as they do in men in order to help reduce poverty and "achieve the wellbeing of all citizens."

Thousands of Congolese expelled from Angola

The deportation of more than 9,000 Congolese people from northern Angola has created a desperate situation in the southern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in recent weeks.

Since the beginning of June 1,745 people have been expelled from Angola to the Bas-Congo region, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The aid agency, Caritas, reported that 7,275 people, including more than 600 children, had been deported across the border to Bandundu since May 12. Jules Mupenda, the Director-General of Migrations for the DRC's immigration service claimed among those expelled were "1,222 women and 312 girls".

"We don't have the means to come to their aid. We can only take them in. But they're ravaging the fields and selling everything they can. Those expelled live in very difficult conditions," Faustin Gyasuma, the secretary general of a support association for the re-insertion of people expelled from Angola, said.

According to aid agencies, more than 350,000 illegal immigrants, the majority of which sought work illegally in the Angolan diamond mines, have been expelled from Angola to DRC since 2004.

Aid and development news

FAO praises Angolan President for boosting agriculture

Agriculture is a priority sector for the Angolan President's plan to boost the economy and the importance of this approach has been officially recognized by Jacques Diouf, the director general of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

The agriculture sector is part of the government's programme for economic diversification, which involves investments in the manufacturing industry, civil engineering and tourism. Initiatives concerning forest cultivation and cattle-breeding reproduction have been launched together with a programme of granting credits to farmers to buy agricultural inputs.

During the press conference held after a meeting with the Angola Agriculture minister, Pedro Canga, Jacques Diouf praised the actions taken by the Government to create fundamental rural infrastructures to make the agriculture sector more productive. He said he was "very happy with the priority that President dos Santos and the Angolan Government have been giving to the farming sector, in particular to the family agriculture."

In mid-July, the Angola Agriculture minister held a meeting with the Portuguese minister of Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries, Jaime Silva. The latter told journalists that the Portuguese Government is willing to start an institutional cooperation aimed at upgrading Angolan professionals at the Research Institutes in Portugal as well as sending Portuguese researchers to Angola.

During the meeting, Angolan minister Canga presented the priorities of the Angolan Government concerning the agro-cattle breeding sector and pointed out cooperation between the two countries should be expanded. Silva said that Portugal intends to import sugar, coffee and other raw materials from Angola in the spirit of friendly cooperation and mutual benefit.

Fewer jobs, more entrepreneurs

According to research carried out by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) together with academic and financial institutions, the lack of employment in post-war Angola has encouraged people to become entrepreneurs.

"This spirit of entrepreneurship is one borne out of necessity, people cannot find jobs so they have to go out and make their own work." Augusto Medina, president of the Portuguese Society of Innovation said, adding that "this level of entrepreneurship is good but we need to see the companies and businesses being upgraded."

Angola recently approved a portfolio of projects of \$1.2bn over the next four years as part of a food security initiative. A Government statement said the investment “will be funded by a credit line from the China Development Bank, private investment and other available lines.”

Number of Angolan Refugees falls to new low

The UNHCR representative to Angola, Bohdan Nahajlo, has announced that the number of Angolan refugees in the agency’s camps has fallen to 100,000, the lowest figure since 2002. According to Bohdan, the steady reduction is due to the process of repatriation and reintegration carried out by the UNHCR together with the Angolan government.

According to the UNHCR, between 2003 and 2007 around 400,000 refugees have been repatriated and reintegrated in their areas of origin. Bohdan pointed out that in Angola there are also 12,710 foreign refugees, mostly from the DRC.

Angola’s higher education achievements

Addressing the ‘Equity, access and quality’ session of the World Conference on Higher Education in Paris, the Angolan head of the State Department for Higher Education, Adão do Nascimento, presented a paper on ‘The development of the public and private education in Angola’. The Angolan official stressed the successful experience of the Angolan national education system, which received substantial investment after independence, leading to an increase in the number of students.

In 2007, the Angolan government created the State Department for Higher Education to support higher education and research playing a strategic role on reconstruction and development in the post-conflict situation. Do Nascimento argued that his Government’s policies are aimed at securing the management, control and development of higher education, in line with the national needs and the millennium development goals.

Alongside the UNESCO conference, Adão do Nascimento held a meeting with Mark Bray, director of the International Institute of Unesco Education Planning, who offered the possibility of training for Angolans, particularly in the fields of planning and statistics, both in the institute and in Angola.

Angola – a Time of Change

In a speech in the United States Luis Samacumbi, of the Evangelical Congregational Church in Angola (IECA) reflected on change in today’s growing Angola. For some it is a time of change, improvement and hope but “only a few at the top are reaping the rewards of economic growth, while over 70 percent of the population live in absolute poverty, off to the side of all this so-called progress,” Samacumbi said.

“We can only have real change in Angola, can only have lasting social and spiritual transformation, if we invest in education. Do we leave change in the hands of rich Angolans and the multi-national interests seeking their own ends, their own enrichment, without a thought for the greater good of the Angolan people? Or do we rise to the occasion and claim positive change, participation and empowerment for the poor, the marginalized, and those without health care, education, and a means to make a decent living?”

Angola, "failed" yet "successful"

What kind of state is Angola? What led it to this? And what are its future prospects? These are the key issues David Sogge explores in his latest paper *Angola- 'Failed' yet 'Successful'* published by FRIDE (Fundacion para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Dialogo Exterior).

The report argues that Angola today needs to be understood neither only nor primarily, as the product of internal forces and processes, but as much the product of western involvement and intervention over 500 years. "External players set the stage for and helped fuel four decades of war and economic upheaval," Sogge points out, adding that "[Angola] illustrates the power of the oil industry - and the national elites who depend on it to corrupt and undermine the legitimacy of whatever political system it touches." "Oil wealth tends to prolong and stabilise autocratic regimes."

In his view Angola's economy is geared to serving the needs of a local elite and foreign interests. He states that five of the world's eight largest corporations are heavily involved in Angola, wielding financial and political power there and in the "geo political structures in which Angola is embedded." He claims that Angola's known oil and gas reserves are relatively modest and the oil boom is likely to have passed by 2020. "The current development model is thus a ticking time bomb."

As for the future, "Angola's state today is stronger than might have been expected. It beat back a serious Cold War effort to overthrow it, widened its political base and consolidated itself as stable autocracy. But public administration and services remain weak and unevenly spread," Sogge says. "As long as powerful and poorly regulated offshore incentives continue to shape elite motivations and visions of Angola's future, the prospects for transformation - a broad developmental vision, state autonomy from special interests, an effective bureaucracy and entrepreneurial class - look anything but bright".

He sees some possibilities linked to the end of the oil boom, the current global economic crisis and local organisations taking the space that may emerge to make government more accountable.

General news

Greater stability at borders since the end of conflict

Addressing the 16th session of the Angola/Namibia Joint Defence and Security Commission, an annual bilateral meeting on defence, state and public security, the Deputy Minister of Defence, Gaspar Rufino, said that the end of the Angolan conflict has created clearance, stability and security at the common border with Namibia.

Rufino particularly stressed the substantial reduction in crimes, including car and cattle theft and attributed these positive results to the Government's intervention, which was carried out with "a spirit of opportunity, persistence and innovation". He admitted that border jumping by Angolan, Namibian and citizens of other origins still occurs, but argued that immigration needs to be studied in depth, from both a defence and security perspective, in order to understand it properly. It is of particular importance to investigate the deep causes of the migratory process, which can be related to economic or political motivations or both.

Angola a stable country

Stefan Schmidt, the Secretary-General of the Consulate of Austria in Angola said that it is now possible to promote state visits and big projects between the two countries.

"There are many ideas worth being materialised, as Angola is now a stable country", said the diplomat, adding that cooperation is possible in various domains, mainly in transfer of technologies and in the health field.

According to Rufino, the example of reciprocal cooperation between Angola and Namibia in the crucial domains of defence and security should be replicated by other African states as a fundamental precondition for security and stability.

SABMiller invests in Angola

A new brewery and soft drinks plant will be opened in Angola this year by SABMiller. The world's number two brewer company will invest \$250 million in total. SAB Miller was formed from a merger between South African Brewers and Miller in the United States and is now listed on the London Stock Exchange. According to the brewer the Angolan demand for beverages is growing and the potential of the Angolan market is very interesting.

"SABMiller remains positive about the potential of the Angolan market and in conjunction with our partners, we are continuing to invest in what will be a bright future for the business," Mark Bowman, managing director of SABMiller Africa, said. He added that "Angola's economy has held up well during the global economic crisis and our team on the ground has risen to the challenges posed by supply chain and infrastructural constraints."

SABMiller made its first investments in Angola at the end of the 1990s, when it decided to manage Empresa Cervejas de N'gola in Lubango. With the opening of the new factory in October, the number of SABMiller and its joint venture partner Empresa Cervejas de N'gola's breweries and bottling plants will be five.

Luanda: The most expensive city in the world?

A recent survey published by ECA International puts the Angolan capital, Luanda, as the most expensive city in the world. The report compared the cost of living in 370 cities around the world and included goods and services usually purchased by expatriates.

"The fact that Luanda leads the top of the list may surprise some," said Lee Quane, of ECA International. But he explained that the presence of Luanda at the top of the list was because many expatriates purchase imported products at high prices, thus inflating the cost of living

Filda attracts world business to Luanda

The 26th edition of the Luanda International Fair (Filda) took place from July 14-19 under the motto 'Angola's Challenges on Agro-business' and was attended by 680 exhibitors from 28 countries. During the opening ceremony, the mascot of the African Football Nations Cup (CAN 2010) promoted the event that will be hosted by Angola in January 2010.

The international fair is seen as a way of attracting the attention and foreign investment. Among the countries attending the fair, Portugal, one of the traditional presences in Filda, stood out with the highest number of exhibitors, totalling 120 companies. Institutions and firms related to the Agriculture Ministry were well represented at the Filda, marketing the potential of the country's farming sector as well as the main initiatives set up in order to achieve a sustainable level of food self-sufficiency.

During Spain's exhibition day at Filda, the Spanish ambassador to Angola, José Maria Castroviego Bolibar, told the press that commercial exchanges between Spain and Angola have recorded a significant growth in the past five years, and currently they reached a volume of about one billion euros. "Angola is an admirable country and we are confident about its development, [...] so we'll continue to invest in the co-operation in various domains," the diplomat said.

Japanese delegation visits Angola

A Japanese health delegation headed by the Ambassador for Health Affairs to Africa, Yasueiro Yamamoto, visited Angola in early July. The week-long visit to the African country was aimed at the reinforcement of bilateral cooperation in medical aid.

The visit was an occasion to exchange experience in the field of health; an opportunity for the two parties to analyse their cooperation and the type of future partnership.

During the visit, Ambassador Yamamoto and his team attended a lecture on health issues to the members of the future Angola Medical Aid Institute, which was create with the assistance of Japan