
Angola Monitor

Issue 1/11

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

This issue covers President dos Santos' state visit to South Africa, the meeting of the general secretaries of liberation movements in Luanda and the 2011 budget and increased investment in industry and health. It also covers calls for more transparency in the oil industry, cases of rape during the continued mass expulsions into DRC and growing concerns about violence against reporters.

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

President Dos Santos makes state visit to South Africa

Angola's President, Jose Eduardo dos Santos, made his first state visit to South Africa in December, in a trip aimed at strengthening diplomatic ties between the two countries.

During the visit Angola and South Africa signed five bilateral agreements, on public works, infrastructure development, telecommunications, information technology and financial facilities. Further agreements on arts and culture, education and merchant shipping are expected to be signed following the visit.

The visit followed President Zuma's trip to Angola in 2009 which saw a number of business deals signed in mining, banking agriculture and oil. The two countries are major trading partners. In 2009 South African exports to Angola totalled 5.5 billion rand (0.8 billion US dollars/ 0.5 billion GBP), while Angola's exports to South Africa amounted to 12 billion rand (1.75 billion dollars/ 1 billion GBP). Diplomatic ties between the two nations are also said to be improving.

President dos Santos was also awarded the Oliver Tambo Order, the highest distinction awarded by South Africa, in recognition of the role he played in the liberation of South Africa. On receiving the award President dos Santos said "We have always considered the struggle of the South African people as an extension of our own struggle and their freedom as part of our own freedom... It is with pride that I receive this medal bearing his name [Oliver Tambo], on behalf of the Angolan people."

British Minister for Africa visits Angola

Britain's Minister for Africa, Henry Bellingham, visited Angola between in December to build strategic partnerships between the two countries, particularly in the fields of trade and commerce. This was the first British Ministerial visit to Angola since 2003 in the run up to the Iraq war when Angola was a member of the UN Security Council.

The visit, which followed a British parliamentary delegation in October, also included a UK-Angola Investment forum, in which British and Angolan companies discussed opportunities and investment in the Angolan Government's diversification strategy.

During the visit Henry Bellingham invited Angolan Foreign Affairs Minister, George Chicoty, to pay an official reciprocal visit to the United Kingdom, between March and April 2011.

Angola celebrates 35 years of independence

Angola marked the 35th anniversary of its independence from Portugal on 11th November with military and civilian parades at Luanda's 11 November stadium. A march featuring soldiers from each unit of the nation's armed forces was followed by a parade of children dancing through the stadium designed to symbolise Angola's rebirth following the civil war which ended in 2002.

Army convoy attacked by Cabinda separatists

The Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda-Armed Forces of Cabinda (Flec-Fac) has claimed responsibility for an attack, on 8 November, on a military convoy which left at least two individuals dead.

The convoy was protecting Chinese miners prospecting for oil in the northern province of Cabinda. While the Secretary of State for Human Rights Antonio Bento Bembe said that two Angolans had died, a spokesperson for Flec-Fac claimed that the attack had killed 12 members of the military.

The oil rich enclave of Cabinda, which is separated from the rest of Angola by the DRC, has experienced unrest from separatist groups for over 30 years.

General secretaries of southern Africa's liberation struggle parties meet

The general secretaries of the political parties that led the liberation struggle in southern Africa met in Luanda on 8th December. The meeting, which was attended by the general secretaries of the MPLA (Angola), ANC (South Africa), FRELIMO (Mozambique), CCM (Tanzania), SWAPO (Namibia) and ZANU PF (Zimbabwe) was preceded by the laying of a wreath at the statue of António Agostinho Neto, Angola's first president.

Economic news

Government to invest two billion dollars to revive industries

As part of its efforts to diversify the country's economy and reduce its reliance on oil, the Angolan Government announced at the beginning of January plans to allocate more than two billion US dollars to revive a number of industries in the country including textiles, construction materials, sugar and metals.

The announcement follows the approval of Angola's budget in December which has seen an increase in spending in a number of sectors including industry through the Public Investments Programme.

Joaquim David, Minister of Geology and Mining and of Industry confirmed investment for the textile industry in the form of more advanced equipment to enable it to better compete against imported goods and to increase production in Malanje. A number of cement factories will also be built to assist the construction industry as well as growth in the mining industry and production of iron, steel, manganese and copper in an attempt to add value to the production of raw minerals.

Economic growth in 2010 fails to meet target

Angola's Finance Minister, Carlos Alberto Lopes said on the 19th November that he expects economic growth rates of 6.7 per cent for 2010. This is far lower than the forecast of 9.7 percent given by the President earlier in the year but higher than the estimate of 4.5 per cent he gave the previous month. The figure is in stark contrast to the predictions of the IMF who estimate that Angola's economy grew by 2.5 per cent in 2010.

Temporary production problems in the oil industry adversely affected the economy, despite increases in the cost of oil.

The government anticipates an increase in growth to 7.6 per cent for 2011 based on improved output in the oil industry and an increase in diamond production. Inflation has been predicted to be at 12 per cent for the year, lower than the 14 per cent it has been in 2010.

Watchdog calls for more transparent Angola oil sector

International watchdog Global Witness has called for more transparency in Angola's oil industry in its report 'Oil revenues in Angola' launched at the beginning of December. The watchdog said opaque management of the country's oil sector makes it difficult to keep track of millions of dollars in revenue. It accuses the state owned oil company Sonangol of being "inherently untransparent and hard to scrutinise" and calls for its remit to be reduced. The report also calls for a well funded and resourced independent regulator to be established to monitor Angola's oil and gas industry and see that income is filtered down to the country's poorest.

Despite efforts to diversify the economy, oil accounts for at least 80 per cent of Angola's exports. Angola's Oil Minister Jose Botelho de Vasconcelos said at the end of October that Angola would be reducing its daily oil production from 1.8 million barrels per day to comply with its OPEC quota but hoped that OPEC would increase its output quota to further contribute to the country's growth.

Human rights news

Government passes domestic violence act

Angola's National Assembly has voted unanimously to approve new legislation against domestic violence. The legislation, passed on December 14th, considers domestic violence to be a public crime and covers conflict between partners as well as family members under the same roof.

The legislation was first announced by Genoveva Lino, the Minister of Family and Women's Promotion, at the beginning of 16 active days against domestic violence. Regulations are expected to be drawn up by civil servants in January in order for the legislation to be implemented. Although there are no official statistics on domestic violence in Angola, evidence suggests that levels are extremely high. A survey by the women's wing of MPLA in 2008 found there were 4,000 incidents in semi urban Cazenga in 2008.

UN call for urgent inquiry on mass expulsions

Valerie Amos, UN under secretary general for humanitarian affairs has called for an urgent inquiry after over 700 people were raped when seven thousand people were expelled from Angola back to the DRC over the course of two months.

Humanitarian workers have reported 600 rapes in Western Kasai province and 104 in the Tembo area of Bandundu province, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

The UN estimates that 160,000 Congolese were expelled from Angola and 51,000 Angolans from Congo in 2009.

It looks unlikely that forced expulsions from Angola will decrease in 2011. In December José Bamukina Zau, Deputy Minister of Home Affairs for Prison Services, announced that actions would be redoubled in the year ahead to tackle illegal immigration. In January Angola's Vice President Fernando da Piedade Dias dos Santos called on chieftains to denounce illegal immigration and report migrants to the police.

Human Rights Watch calls for changes to security legislation

At the beginning of November the Angolan government passed new legislation on crimes against the security of the state to replace its controversial 1978 state security law. However, concern has been raised that the new legislation does not meet international standards for freedom of speech and assembly. International NGO Human Rights Watch has called on the government to urgently amend the legislation.

Article 26 of the new law states that "turmoil, disorder or riots" that "disturb the functioning of organs of sovereignty" would be a crime against the security of the state, punishable by up to two years in prison.

The lack of definition of the activities that are named in this clause could restrict the right to peaceful assembly protected under international law, Human Rights Watch said.

The NGO has also called for the release of human rights activists who were detained under the 1978 legislation following the attack on a bus carrying the Togolese national football team last January in Cabinda. The NGO has questioned why the Constitutional Court has failed to rule on a motion submitted by the Angolan Bar Association that the legislation under which the five men were convicted was unconstitutional. According to Human Rights watch observers say the law was passed quickly because the government expected the Constitutional Court to revoke article 26 of the 1978 law, which would have invalidated the convictions of the five men.

Unions raise concerns about violence against the media

The Union of Angolan Journalists (UAJ) has raised concerns about the recent rise in violence against reporters in the country. One journalist was murdered and two were attacked between September and October 2010.

In September radio journalist Alberto Tchakussanga was shot and died from his injuries. Later in the same month a TV Zimbo reporter, Norberto Abias Sateko, was also shot. In October Radio Despertar host, Antonio Manuel da Silva, was stabbed in the stomach.

Luisa Rogerio, UAJ's secretary general said "We want an investigation to determine if these crimes are linked to their work as journalists." Reporters without Borders have also raised concerns about the attacks with the government. "The level of violence is very disturbing. The physical safety of journalists is in danger. We are alarmed by the gravity of these attacks," wrote the organisation's secretary general, Jean-Francois Julliard.

Aid and development news

Funding for landmine clearance falls

Funding for landmine clearance in Angola has declined by 50 per cent according to the HALO Trust. The mine clearance charity claims that cuts in funding from international governments have resulted in a tripling of accidents involving landmines, from 28 in 2009 to 80 in 2010. The charity has been forced to terminate its mine clearance operations in the southern district of Benguela, despite 667 minefields requiring clearance.

As the government has embarked on building infrastructure throughout the country, mine fields in rural areas have become more accessible to people unaware of the locations of danger zones, placing them at risk of injury from unexploded devices.

Landmine clearance has however continued successfully in a number of areas with over a million square meters cleared in Huambo province between January and October 2010. Over 4,000 non detonated explosives were removed from one of the country's most heavily mined areas.

In addition to landmine clearance, efforts continue to disarm the population of small firearms in circulation from the civil war which ended in 2002. Over the course of 2010 almost 6,000 assorted firearms were handed over voluntarily to the National Police in southern Huila province.

Mass polio vaccination campaign is launched

The mass vaccination campaign to deal with the outbreak of polio in Angola began in November 2010. The campaign, supported by UNICEF, the World Health Organisation and Rotary International is being run in Angola, Congo and DRC. Angola had been Polio free for six years, until the outbreak began in 2007. It has increased in recent months and is the only expanding outbreak in Africa. The only other

recent cases of polio in Africa have been in Nigeria, which has managed to reduce cases by 99 per cent through effective immunisation.

Angola's mass roll out of immunisation began in October and has been continued into 2011. The World Health Organisation has previously criticised the Angolan Government for poorly run vaccination campaigns which have missed a third of children in critical transmission areas, including Luanda.

Parliament votes to increase health budget

The Angolan National Assembly voted on the 14th December to increase the country's health budget allocation to 3.5 per cent. The increase is aimed to assist Angola in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, specifically on ending endemic diseases and improving infant and maternal health. Ngola Kabangu, parliamentary whip for the opposition FNLA party, welcomed the move saying it was a victory for all the members of parliament.

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