
Angola as a Global Influence: Priorities for International Cooperation

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Introduction

This document provides a summary of a meeting and questions and answers session held at Chatham House on 13 June 2014 that looked at Angola's engagement in an increasingly multipolar world. Reaping the benefits of more than a decade of stability and fast economic growth, Angola increasingly wields global influence. Angola seeks to diversify its bilateral partnerships and improve existing ones, and is well-placed to exert its influence in multilateral fora. At this roundtable event, Angola's Secretary of State for Cooperation, Maria Ângela Bragança, discussed Angola's international priorities and how Angola is helping to shape key issues of global importance in a multipolar world.

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Maria Ângela Bragança

Maria Ângela Bragança stated that, following the end of the military conflict in 2002, the Angolan government established a set of priorities to facilitate development, including reconciliation, improved social cohesion and national reconstruction. This process gave rise to the building of the social and economic infrastructures and the re-establishment of democratic rule, the basis of political stability necessary for the safeguard of rapid economic growth, and the opening of the country to stable economic partnership via private investment and international cooperation.

In 2013, the National Development Plan (*Plano Nacional de Desenvolvimento*) for 2013–17 was implemented. This seeks to promote economic diversification by gradually reducing the weight of the oil sector in the economy in order to promote entrepreneurship and to develop the private sector. At present, the oil sector represents around 45 per cent of Angola's GDP, 60 per cent of fiscal revenues and 90 per cent of exports.

The speaker stated that the National Development Plan aims to promote growth and the redistribution of national wealth, which will reduce hunger and poverty. The plan is in line with the Millennium Development Goals and with the Post-2015 Agenda, and arose from a longer-term strategy to reposition Angola in the regional and continental context by 2025.

Angola plays an important regional role in the prevention of conflict due to a political standing based on political stability. The government has a clear view that the consolidation of the country's political process and the success of the development programme will only be possible with the stability of the African continent, particularly in the immediate region. This is why the government has played such an active role in its presidency of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR).

Through his presidency of the ICGLR, President José Eduardo dos Santos has set out three priorities: for member states of the ICGLR to adhere to the Pact on Security, Stability and Development signed in 2006; to encourage cultural interchange and economic development between member states; and to promote secure borders and conflict resolution within the region. The speaker noted that the Angolan presidency of the ICGLR will be crucial for the consolidation of the country's image, as it plays the role of an indispensable broker for peace and security in the region.

Furthermore, Angola is presenting itself as a candidate to become a non-permanent member of the Security Council of the United Nations for 2015–16. In doing so, Angola would bring its experience of national reconciliation and reconstruction to the other members of the Security Council.

Angola's external policy advocates dialogue and political reconciliation. Its regional influence can be utilized to promote peace and stability, but the speaker noted that bilateral and multilateral cooperation is also needed. Angola has a number of priorities set out to achieve economic through cooperation.

- To consolidate the relationship with international financial institutions, to improve the conditions of financing for the economy and the capability of economic management, prioritizing structural projects.
- To maintain political and macro-economic stability and to improve the business environment, so that the economy keeps growing and gets closer to the most dynamic economies of sub-Saharan Africa.
- To stimulate foreign private investment that – alongside public investment – will lead to the realization of many structural projects needed for the eradication of poverty.
- To strengthen the entrepreneurial sector and to promote partnership with foreign businesses, in the context of the process of diversification of the economy.
- To develop economic relations within the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (*Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa*), with other African countries and especially within the Southern African Development Community; with European countries, bilaterally and with the European Union (via the Joint Way Through agreement) and with Asian countries.

Maria Ângela Bragança stated that Angola benefited intensely from aid during the military conflict, but aid has been reduced due to the strong economic performance shown by the country in recent years. Aid has been progressively replaced by dynamic cooperative relationships with other countries.

The agenda for the National Development Plan involves numerous initiatives, including the reduction of poverty, infrastructural projects, economic development and rehabilitation of the agriculture sector, the improvement of the water and energy supply, reform of the public sector, improvement in governance, the protection of human rights and of the environment, and in education and health.

With the National Plan of Development 2013–17, the Angolan government is investing in the improvement of the distribution of the national wealth as an economic objective, but also from the political and ethical perspective.

Summary of questions and answers

Questions

Angola is growing in importance as a country, especially in the international economy and in the field of foreign investment. Which countries will Angola be prioritizing for future investment?

Angola has an important relationship with Russia, which will be significant in terms of the UN Security Council. How would you evaluate this relationship at present, in light of Russia's current engagement with Ukraine?

Maria Ângela Bragança

Maria Ângela Bragança stated that Angola is looking to diversify its exports. At present, oil and gas constitute the vast majority of total exports. Exports are directed towards countries with which Angola has a direct strategic partnership.

Angola is increasingly attracting private investment, from countries such as Portugal, Cape Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe. However the speaker added that there is a sense of imbalance in terms of the ease with which Angola can export to countries from which it receives imports.

According to the speaker, it must be remembered that in the past, Angola had a preferential relationship with the countries of the Eastern bloc. It has a history of cooperation with Russia in the economic, political and military sectors, and Russia acted as a training base for Angolan military troops.

As for Ukraine, the speaker stated that Angola conducts its foreign policy in line with the UN. Angola advocates political reconciliation and dialogue in order to attain the stability which is needed for cooperation and development.

Questions

Could you comment on the role that international oil companies could play in supporting Angola's national agenda, particularly with regard to your objective of economic diversification?

You have stated that Angola is embarking on a process of economic diversification. Which sectors will Angola focus on in its diversification programme?

You mentioned Angola's objective to consolidate its relationships with international financial institutions and China. How would you qualify those relationships at present? Additionally, how would you describe Angola's relationship with Portugal at present?

Maria Ângela Bragança

Maria Ângela Bragança stated that oil companies play a significant role in Angola, as most of the national wealth comes from the oil sector. Moreover, many companies such as British Petroleum have social programmes, which are important. The revenue of the oil companies is very much linked with the development plan for Angola. The speaker added that economic diversification, particularly needed to boost the agricultural sector, will not mean that oil companies have less of a role to play.

The speaker noted that economic diversification will, however, generate jobs. Angola's agriculture sector was suppressed during the war, due to the mines scattered around the country. Today, agribusiness is growing, as is logistical infrastructure, including better management of national ports and development of the railways; the Lobito Corridor is one such project.

The Speaker stated that Angola currently enjoys a good relationship with the international finance institutions. It received a very positive assessment from the World Bank on the performance of the economy. Angola's objective is to create economic sustainability to make the country viable for partnership with other countries. It wants to situate itself within the world economy.

Angola has a historical relationship with Portugal, and with other lusophone countries. The speaker stated that this is a priority for foreign policy. Angola has a strategic relationship with Brazil. It was preparing to

establish a similar strategic relationship with Portugal, but this was not understood by a certain sector of the Portuguese political sector, and thus this relationship was suspended. However, the speaker stated that Angola continues to work with Portugal, and that the two countries will always be linked. There are joint engagements in many sectors, including oil exploration, banking and telecommunications. There is also a large presence of Angolans in Portuguese universities, and vice versa.

Questions

Another lusophone country, Mozambique, is a member of the Commonwealth. Does Angola have an approach to the Commonwealth?

What sort of relationship do you see between the United Kingdom and Angola? Is this a strategic relationship?

What are Angola's priorities in terms of human rights?

Angola is due to go through its second Universal Periodic Review (UPR) with the UN towards the end of this year. What changes has Angola been through since the last UPR?

What role do you see for international NGOs in Angola in the future?

Maria Ângela Bragança

Maria Ângela Bragança noted that Angola enjoys positive relations with countries in the Commonwealth, and has a good relationship with the United Kingdom, so there is potential for engagement with the Commonwealth.

On the United Kingdom, the speaker stated that the United Kingdom should encourage British investment in Angola. The countries are now engaged in a High-Level Prosperity Partnership to encourage trade, and this was discussed when Angola recently hosted the UK prime minister's trade envoy to Angola and Nigeria. This was also due to be a subject of discussion during a visit by the president to the United Kingdom; this visit was postponed but will probably occur soon.

As for human rights, the speaker stated that Angola has not always been blameless, but has also been misunderstood at times. Angola recognizes that it has to move forward on human rights. The speaker stated that due the military conflict, it was necessary to establish some priorities in terms of reconciliation and economic development.

Today, public institutions have to offer better services to citizens, particularly in the fields of justice, internal security and in ensuring political freedoms. Angola is currently working to establish a modern national police force, and has set up training schemes for police officers. The speaker noted that the constitution, adopted in 2010, widened these safeguards, and the right conditions must be created in order to put these into practice. In this aspect, Angola has moved forward, but there is still some way to go.

There have been improvements since the previous UPR, and Angola remains open for assessment on this, and for input from NGOs. The speaker added that Angola acknowledges that efforts and contributions that NGOs have made in the country, especially in the more remote areas where there was little access to public institutions.