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The Comissão Nacional Eleitoral (CNE) (national election commission) publishes final results from the 23 August general election, reflecting almost exactly the provisional results it released on 25 August. The four main opposition parties – União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA), Convergência Ampla de Salvação de Angola - Coligação Eleitoral (CASA-CE), Partido de Renovação Social (PRS), Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola (FNLA) – issue a joint statement declaring the result “illegal and unconstitutional”. Tribunal Constitucional da Republica de Angola (TCA) (constitutional court) chief justice Rui Ferreira dismisses opposition court challenges to the final results.

CNE releases final election results

The **Comissão Nacional Eleitoral (CNE)** (national election commission), on 6 September, published final results from the general election held on 23 August.¹ The final results confirm that the ruling **Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA)** will maintain its parliamentary majority and its presidential candidate, **João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço**, will therefore replace the outgoing president, **José Eduardo dos Santos (1979-2017)**. The final election results reflect almost exactly the provisional results released on 25 August (see *ARC Briefing Angola August 2017*). In the presidential vote, CASA-CE won 0.1% less than expected, in favour of the **Partido de Renovação Social (PRS)** party. As a percentage of seats in parliament, the MPLA won 7% more than its percentage of total votes, while **União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA)** won 3.5% fewer seats in parliament than its percentage of total votes (see *Figure 1*).

Compared to the 2012 general election result, the MPLA has lost over 10% of votes, and 11.4% of parliamentary seats (see *Figure 1*). The opposition has also increased its vote share in that time – up to 38.9% of votes, from 28.2%. The opposition is less fractured than previously, with smaller parties seemingly assimilated into larger parties.

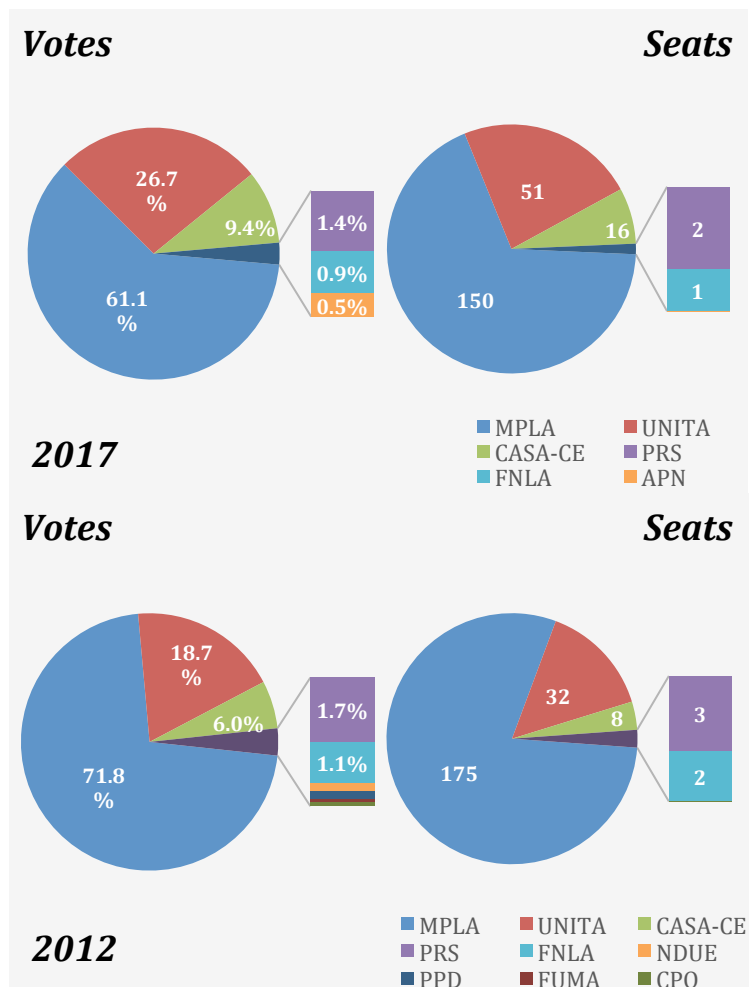


Figure 1: www.eleicoesgerais.cne.ao

¹ eleicoesgerais.cne.ao

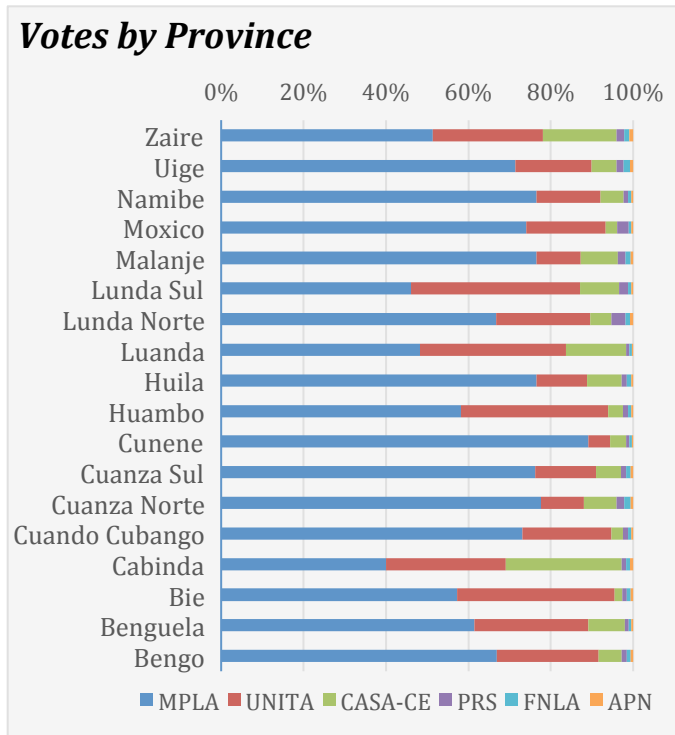


Figure 2: www.eleicoesgerais.cne.ao

61%. The concern is how this will affect Lourenço's mandate and freedom from the old regime."²

According to a senior Angolan political analyst,

*"There have been reports that the MPLA is no longer legitimately in power and of stolen elections ... However constitutionally, the head of the party, or coalition of parties, that gains the most votes wins the presidency and the MPLA remains the largest party, even if that majority has been inflated."*³

However, the main opposition parties – UNITA and CASA-CE – are divided, which will help the MPLA deal with the beginning of their legitimacy problem:

*"In the official results, UNITA won 26.7% and CASA-CE 9.5%. Although UNITA proposed a coalition, there is little to suggest that CASA-CE is interested in taking them up on that. CASA-CE leader **Abel Chivukuvuku** is ex-UNITA and there has been little love lost between them. The doctored Sensus documents [see above] showed CASA-CE support as larger than the election results suggest, so it is possible they are the injured party in these elections."*⁴

The result of the 2017 general election highlights a decline in the MPLA's performance on a national level. Opposition parties remain unable to beat the MPLA in even one of Angola's 18 provinces, but the margins are narrowing. Opposition parties could realistically form a coalition for the 2022 general election, with the aim of beating the MPLA.

...as opposition parties contest the result

Prior to the CNE publication of the official final results, four opposition parties – UNITA, CASA-CE, PRS, and **Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola (FNLA)** – issued a joint statement on 4 September in which they declared the results *"illegal and unconstitutional"*⁵ and would not recognise

² Source, political analyst, Angola

³ Source, senior political analyst, Angola

⁴ Source, Angola analyst, United Kingdom

⁵ www.makaangola.com

“... any results produced on the margins of the law”.⁶ The four opposition parties demanded a recount at provincial level “on the basis of the law and the constitution”.⁷ Moreover, they declared that only three of Angola’s 18 provinces – Cabinda, **Uíge** and Zaire – had processed the election results in accordance with the electoral law.⁸ However, the CNE chairman, **André da Silva Neto**, on 4 September, categorically rejected opposition allegations of fraud.⁹

Although UNITA had threatened to boycott parliament, it withdrew its threat on 16 September.¹⁰ UNITA’s decision will reduce the possibility of violent unrest and street protests by UNITA supporters.¹¹ UNITA does not view the decision as giving in to the ruling MPLA, but rather as a tactical decision to continue the fight for democracy from within the system.¹² UNITA leader, **Isaias Samakuva** said,

“We will sit in parliament in order to continue the democratic struggle within and outside of our institutions ... Are we going to allow others to be alone at the National Assembly... and transform illegalities into laws that penalise us?”¹³

According to a leading Angola political analyst, the challenge from UNITA was predictable but futile,

“It was inevitable that UNITA would contest the results ... UNITA always have, even where the elections have been rigorously monitored. The initial complaints were based on the Angolan equivalent of exit polls and lacked any published substantive detail. These complaints have now been rejected by the constitutional court [see above] ... ”¹⁴

One of the issues the opposition groups raised was the result of a pre-election opinion poll that **Brazil-based Sensus Pesquisa e Consultoria**, conducted on behalf of the ruling MPLA, which claimed to show that the ruling MPLA would only receive 34% of the popular vote. However, the same leading Angola political analyst stated,

“I was able to obtain a copy from those protesting the result, and it is clear to me this document has been extensively doctored; alleged research and pages have been inserted and many graphs do not show what they purport to show but are instead multiple copies of the same graph, among other issues. The survey was completed by March 2017, and shows dos Santos as the MPLA presidential candidate, so the research does not include any effects of president elect Lourenço as the new candidate.”¹⁵

A senior Angola academic, conversant with Angolan electoral politics said,

“... a different civilian group – a group of Angola citizens – has concluded that the MPLA in fact won 50.91% of the vote, by carrying out a parallel vote count. This, while lower, still gives the MPLA an outright majority.”¹⁶

The opposition challenge to the CNE’s election result appeared to be the only recourse for opposition parties to obtain a recount. This now appears very unlikely.

... the Constitutional Court upholds MPLA’s election victory

Tribunal Constitucional da Republica de Angola (TCA) (constitutional court) chief justice **Rui Ferreira** on 13 September dismissed opposition court challenges to the final results of the 23 August

⁶ www.makanagola.com

⁷ www.makanagola.com

⁸ www.makanagola.com

⁹ www.angop.ao

¹⁰ World Bulletin. “Angola’s UNITA drops parliament boycott threat over vote dispute,” www.worldbulletin.net, 17 Sept 2017.

¹¹ Source, Angola analyst, United Kingdom

¹² AFP. “Angola’s UNITA drops parliament boycott threat,” www.nation.co.ke, 17 Sept 2017.

¹³ AFP. “Angola’s UNITA drops parliament boycott threat,” www.nation.co.ke, 17 Sept 2017.

¹⁴ Source, Angola political analyst, United Kingdom

¹⁵ Source, Angola political analyst, United Kingdom

¹⁶ Source, academic, well versed in Angolan electoral politics, Angola

general election.¹⁷ The TCA decision, which is not subject to appeal,¹⁸ upholds the MPLA election victory. UNITA spokesperson **Ruben Sicato** told the media on 9 September that,

*"The law was completely violated and that means the results which the CNE published are invalid."*¹⁹

However, Ferreira stated that,

*"... because the allegations of the applicant or facts and irregularities of the voting attributed have not been proven ... The President of the Republic elected, the Vice-President of the Republic elected and the elected National Assembly, shall be invested in their respective functions ..."*²⁰

FNLA spokesperson **John Benghy Vundu**, said the FNLA will respect the TCA's decision, but said he had

*"... no doubt that the definitive results published by the National Electoral Commission were fabricated in a laboratory."*²¹

The TCA's ruling makes a further contestation of the election result all but impossible, unless the opposition or major international organisations discover evidence so compelling it would put the TCA's ruling into question. Even in this case, it is very unlikely that the TCA reconsider its dismissal of the opposition's court challenges.

... as the dos Santos family and MPLA old guard look likely to remain influential

The transition from dos Santos to Lourenço is less sweeping than would initially appear. With dos Santos *"gravely ill"*²², a run for re-election was unlikely. However, dos Santos will remain influential in the MPLA, where he is the head of the 363-member central committee (mandate expires in 2121), head of the 47-member central committee's political bureau, and head of the secretariat of the central committee's political bureau (mandate expires in 2121).²³ Lourenço reportedly had a tense relationship with dos Santos until 2014, following a comment he had made when secretary general, suggesting that there are plenty of capable successors to dos Santos.²⁴ Lourenço overcame this to secure his election to the defence ministry. Reportedly, only dos Santos' death or incapacitation could provide president-elect Lourenço with the political freedom to chart his own course.²⁵

*"How long will dos Santos remain head of the MPLA? Until he dies or becomes disabled in other ways, I suspect. No real other indicators yet, too early to tell ... or dos Santos may be eased out of power into a purely ceremonial position over time if he does not die soon."*²⁶

In some local journalists' view, Lourenço lacks the leadership qualities to challenge dos Santos' continued influence,

*"Lourenço is really not a very strong guy or a guy with a clear vision of the future...he is still going to be controlled by dos Santos. I am deeply worried about Lourenço. He cannot think on his feet. No vision. A lot of clichés. Dos Santos is going to be head of the party. This may not last because Lourenço just needs a trusted cabal around him who will assert themselves and bring about change. But in the beginning it will be dos Santos and [chief of the **Casa Militar** (military,*

¹⁷ Portalangop.ao

¹⁸ www.dw.com

¹⁹ ewn.co.za

²⁰ www.dw.com; Opais.sapo.mz

²¹ www.dw.com

²² Source, Angola analyst, United Kingdom

²³ www.mpla.ao - 21 Sept 2017.

²⁴ Source, journalist, Luanda

²⁵ Source, Angola analyst, United Kingdom

²⁶ Source, Angola analyst, United Kingdom

security and intelligence office) general **Manuel Helder Vieira Dias Junior] Kopelipa**. The key is – who are his [Lourenço's] advisors going to be?"²⁷

Although Lourenço has less influence in the MPLA than dos Santos, he does have the benefit of direct relations with multilateral institutions. Lourenço's wife, **Ana Afonso Dias Lourenço**, is executive director at the **World Bank** for Angola, **Nigeria** and **South Africa**.²⁸ It is unclear how influential Ana Lourenço could be in offsetting dos Santos' continued influence on government.

Outside of dos Santos himself, his allies will remain in their posts, and will wield significant influence over Lourenço. In particular, Kopelipa and out-going vice president **Manuel Vicente** will reportedly be the "guiding figures"²⁹ for Lourenço and his new government. Under dos Santos, Vicente, Kopelipa and General **Leopoldino Fragoso 'Dino' do Nascimento**, who is Kopelipa's special adviser, were described as the three most powerful figures in Angola.³⁰

Furthermore, the dos Santos direct family members remain influential. Dos Santos' daughter, **Isabel dos Santos**, remains chair of state-owned oil and gas company **Sociedade Nacional de Combustíveis de Angola – Empresa Pública (Sonangol)**, the government's single largest source of revenue.³¹ However, Isabel dos Santos' will reportedly not have a strong base of support within the aforementioned military and government officials, and she does not have a strong network within the ruling MPLA.³² There is speculation that Kopelipa, Dino and Vicente may seek to push Isabel dos Santos out of Sonangol.

*"My view is that Kopelipa, Dino and Vicente might actually reassert themselves. They are not very happy with Isabel. All three would be happy to see her go."*³³

The transition from dos Santos to Lourenço is more of a continuation than it is a rupture or change to the status quo. Peaceful transition is encouraging, especially after Angola's tumultuous political history. However, the main centres of influence around dos Santos during his mandate seem likely to remain in their posts for the duration of Lourenço's term. It appears that the main power struggles around Lourenço will be between members of the dos Santos family (including the former president) and the **Casa Militar**.

Planner

Jul 2018 **Luanda (Angola)** *Press Release*. The **Feira Internacional de Angola** (international fair of Luanda) begins;

14 Jun 2018 **Luanda (Angola)** *Press Release*. The **Africa Oil & Gas Local Content Conference & Exhibition** conference begins;

30 Nov 2017 **Luanda (Angola)** *Press Release*. **Deloitte** hosts the **Sirius Awards**;

23 Oct 2017 **Cape Town (South Africa)** *Press Release*. The **Africa Oil Week** conference begins;

28 Sept 2017 **Luanda (Angola)** *Press Release*. **International Monetary Fund** representative **Max Alier** hosts a discussion on Angola's economic outlook;

27 Sept 2017 **Luanda (Angola)** *Press Release*. The **Universidade Agostinho Neto** hosts a scientific conference on "Investigating for Angola's development: current situation and challenges";

²⁷ Source, journalist with high profile political connections, Angola

²⁸ Multiple sources: Club-K, 8 Jan 2016; www.worldbank.org

²⁹ Source, Angola analyst, United Kingdom

³⁰ Financial Times, 2014.

³¹ www.macaudailytimes.com

³² Source, Angola analyst, United Kingdom

³³ Source, former senior Sonangol employee, Angola

Chronology

25 Sept 2017 **Luanda (Angola)** *AIP*. **Côte d'Ivoire** President **Alassane Ouattara** arrives in Luanda ahead of President **João Lourenço**'s inauguration;

25 Sept 2017 **Luanda (Angola)** *Agência Lusa*. President-elect **João Lourenço** will be inaugurated president on 26 September;

18 Sept 2017 **(Angola)** *Agência Lusa*. **Portugal**'s President **Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa** will attend the inauguration ceremony of President **João Lourenço** on 26 September;

17 Sept 2017 **Luanda (Angola)** *DW*. The main opposition **UNITA** agrees to partake in parliamentary proceedings, after claiming that its elected MPs would not do so in order to contest the irregularities of the general election;

13 Sept 2017 **Luanda (Angola)** *DW*. The **Tribunal Constitucional da República de Angola** (constitutional court) chief justice **Rui Ferreira** dismisses opposition court challenges to the final results of the 23 August general election;

11 Sept 2017 **Luanda (Angola)** *DW*. Vice president of the opposition **UNITA** party, **Raúl Danda**, says that the party does not rule out protests against the 23 August general election result;

6 Sept 2017 **Luanda (Angola)** *Bloomberg*. Outgoing President **José Eduardo dos Santos** promotes 165 senior police officers;

6 Sept 2017 **Luanda (Angola)** *Press Release*. The **Comissão Nacional Eleitoral** (national election commission) releases final results from the 23 August general elections, confirming 61.08% of votes for the **MPLA**;

4 Sept 2017 **(Angola)** *Reuters*. State-owned **Angola LNG** will begin delivering shipments of liquefied natural gas to **Netherlands**-based **Vitol Group** later in 2017;

3 Sept 2017 **Luanda (Angola)** *Agência Lusa*. Opposition parties – **UNITA**, **CASA-CE**, **PRS** and the **FNLA** – call for a recount of general election votes, deeming the result 'irregular' and 'unconstitutional';

30 Aug 2017 **Luanda (Angola)** *Maka Angola*. **Comissão Nacional Eleitoral** (electoral commission) spokesperson **Júlia Ferreira** announces that it has definitive results for 11 out of 18 provinces;

28 Aug 2017 **Luanda (Angola)** *Bloomberg*. The government is reportedly in talks with banks in order to issue a \$2 billion **Eurobond**;

25 Aug 2017 **Luanda (Angola)** *Agência Lusa*. The **Comissão Nacional Eleitoral** (electoral commission) announces that, with 98% of votes counted, the ruling **MPLA** wins the general election with 61.1% of votes, against the main opposition **UNITA**'s 26.7%;

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