

## AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

### Angola Monthly Briefing March 2025

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#### Angola Summary 31 March 2025

**Angola announces it will withdraw from its role as mediator in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The corruption trial of Generals Hélder Vieira Dias Júnior and Leopoldino do Nascimento, accused of defrauding the Angolan state of hundreds of millions of dollars, begins in Luanda on 10 March. More than 20 senior leaders and representatives of African and other opposition parties are detained or deported without explanation on arrival at Aeroporto Internacional 4 de Fevereiro in Luanda on 13 March.**

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#### Angola withdraws as mediator in DRC conflict

Following the **March 23 Movement (M23)** rebel group's withdrawal from peace talks scheduled to take place in **Luanda** on 18 March, President **Joao Lourenço** (2017-present) has withdrawn as the **African Union's (AU)** mediator in the conflict in the **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**.<sup>1</sup> The Angolan presidency announced this in a communiqué on 24 March, noting that another African head of state would be tasked with the role.<sup>2</sup>

Lourenço set up mediation between DRC's President **Felix Tshisekedi** (2019-present) of the DRC and the **Rwanda**-backed M23 in Luanda, the first time the adversaries had met since 2013. It was a crucial meeting since the DRC has repeatedly refused to talk directly to the M23. However, on 17 March, M23 withdrew from the talks after the **European Union (EU)** placed further sanctions on senior members of the M23, including its head **Bertrand Bisimwa**, and three Rwandan military commanders and its mining agency chief over their support for armed fighters, including M23.<sup>3</sup> **Rwanda** subsequently severed diplomatic relations with Belgium.<sup>4</sup> Rwanda denies providing the M23 with military assistance, despite evidence that it does, but says it faces a threat in the DRC's east from the **FDLR** rebel group.<sup>5</sup> These negotiations must take account of what Kagame perceives as an existential threat in the eastern DRC.<sup>6</sup>

Angola's foreign ministry said the meeting had been called off for "*reasons and circumstances of force majeure*".<sup>7</sup> Lourenço and foreign minister **Téte António** both expressed considerable surprise when Rwanda's President **Paul Kagame** (2000-present) and Tshisekedi met for talks in **Doha (Qatar)** on the same day as the talks in Luanda were scheduled to take place, without informing the mediator.<sup>8</sup> Following the Qatar meeting, the two presidents issued a statement that called for an "*immediate and unconditional ceasefire*", details of whose implementation will be clarified "*in the coming days*."<sup>9</sup>

Since January, the M23 has seized the key cities of **Goma (North Kivu Province)** and **Bukavu (South Kivu Province)** in an advance that has killed more than 7,000 people.<sup>10</sup> This has led Tshisekedi to extend a unilateral offer to **United States (US)** President **Donald Trump** (2025-present) for

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<sup>1</sup> Agencia Fides, 24 Mar 2025

<sup>2</sup> Agencia Fides, 24 Mar 2025

<sup>3</sup> Xinhua, 19 Mar 2025

<sup>4</sup> Al Jazeera, 17 Mar 2025

<sup>5</sup> AFP, 18 Mar 2025

<sup>6</sup> ARC Source, journalist, DRC/Belgium

<sup>7</sup> Xinhua, 19 Mar 2025

<sup>8</sup> Angop, 20 Mar 2025

<sup>9</sup> Angop, 20 Mar 2025

<sup>10</sup> AFP, 18 Mar 2025

exclusive access to the DRC's mineral wealth in exchange for a security pact in the eastern DRC.<sup>11</sup> An **ARC Briefing** source noted that this is a problematic offer:

*"Well, Tshisekedi's move is desperate. He's offering the US access to resources he does not control anymore (coltan) or may not control much longer (gold, lithium and eventually cobalt and oil)."*<sup>12</sup>

**Mario Nawfal**, a citizen journalist supporter of Trump with high level access, was able to interview Kagame on X, on 12 March. Kagame's message to Trump via Nawfal was that he will agree to such a deal.<sup>13</sup> There is no information on whether this initiative was discussed in the Qatar meeting a few days later.

Any minerals agreement between the US and DRC will impact directly on Angola's economic interests, in the **Lobito Corridor**, which is the current principal export route for the DRC's minerals, brokered by **Swiss** multinational commodities trader **Trafigura**. The US has backed the infrastructure development, with former president **Joe Biden** (2021-2025) promising a further \$600m for the corridor in December 2024.<sup>14</sup>

A joint summit of the **Eastern African Community (EAC)** and **South African Development Community (SADC)** appointed an expanded panel to lead peace efforts in the DRC, following Angola's formal withdrawal as a mediator.<sup>15</sup> In the meantime, the mediation Qatar initiated will continue.<sup>16</sup>

### Corruption trial of Generals Kopelipa and Dino starts

The corruption trial of two of the three men closest to former president **Jose Eduardo dos Santos** (1978-2017), Generals **Hélder Vieira Dias Júnior**, also known as **Kopelipa**, and **Leopoldino do Nascimento**, also known as **Dino**, began in **Luanda** on 10 March. Kopelipa and Dino are accused of defrauding the state of hundreds of millions of dollars. Also accused are Angolan lawyer **Fernando Gomes dos Santos**, Chinese national **Yu Haiming**, and three companies.<sup>17</sup> In a pre-trial hearing on 20 December 2024, the court considered that the defendants *"did not bring any relevant elements to disprove the accusation"* and that sufficient evidence had been gathered to try all the defendants in the case.<sup>18</sup>

The attorney general filed multiple charges of criminal association, money-laundering, fraud, falsification of documents and influence-peddling against Kopelipa, Dino and Haiming in 2022. Kopelipa faces two additional charges of abuse of power and embezzlement.<sup>19</sup> The three companies alleged to be set up by the defendants, the **China International Fund Angola (CIF)**, of which Haiming is the former general director, and two **British Virgin Island** based subsidiaries of CIF, **Plansmart International Limited** and **Utter Right International Limited**, are accused of influence trafficking and money laundering.<sup>20</sup>

The charges relate to billions of dollars in loans **China** granted to Angola from 2003 onwards for post war reconstruction. The **Gabinete de Reconstrução Nacional (GRN)** (national reconstruction office), headed by Kopelipa, was created to manage these credit lines from China and the post-war rebuilding of Angola.<sup>21</sup> The parent company of CIF was set up in **Hong Kong** in 2005, to finance projects defined by the GRN, to the value of \$2.9 billion.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Bloomberg, 21 Mar 2025

<sup>12</sup> ARC Source, journalist, DRC/Belgium

<sup>13</sup> X, 12 Mar 2025

<sup>14</sup> Atlantic Council, 20 Dec 2024

<sup>15</sup> Capital FM, 25 Mar 2025

<sup>16</sup> Agencia Fides, 24 Mar 2025

<sup>17</sup> CE Noticias Financieras English, 11 Mar 2025

<sup>18</sup> CE Noticias Financieras English, 10 Mar 2025

<sup>19</sup> Maka Angola, 14 July 2022

<sup>20</sup> CE Noticias Financieras English, 11 Mar 2025

<sup>21</sup> Deutsche Welle, 12 July 2022

<sup>22</sup> China In Angola, 2008

On the second day of the trial, defence lawyers Kopelipa and Dino asked that the defendants be acquitted of most of the charges, under the 2016 amnesty law passed by former president dos Santos. This law provided amnesties for crimes punishable by a prison sentence of up to 12 years that were committed by nationals or foreigners between 11 November 1975 and 11 November 2015, except for the crime of embezzlement.<sup>23</sup>

The attorney general responded that the amnesty law did not apply to these crimes because they continued after the cut-off date of November 2015, and the defendants don't have impunity.<sup>24</sup> It was not until 2020 that the two generals handed back assets created with state funding, valued at about \$1 billion, to the national asset recovery department, after being questioned about contracts between the state and the CIF by the attorney general's office.<sup>25</sup>

In December 2021, the **United States (US) Treasury Department** placed sanctions on Kopelipa and Dino, and on companies controlled by Dino, stating they "*conspired with other individuals to divert funding intended for infrastructure development projects, including the use of ghost projects*".<sup>26</sup> One such infrastructure project left uncompleted by the GRN was the new Luanda international airport. This was agreed on in 2007 and was contracted to CIF in 2013 at a cost of \$6 billion but construction barely started. The airport was completed by the current government in 2023, at a cost of \$3.8 billion.<sup>27</sup>

The court has been hearing legal and constitutional arguments in defence of the accused. The evidence has yet to be heard. The case is expected to last for several months, with 38 witnesses and declarants to be heard.<sup>28</sup>

### **African opposition leaders denied entry to Angola to attend UNITA conference**

More than 20 senior leaders and representatives of African and other opposition parties were detained or deported without explanation on arrival at **Aeroporto Internacional 4 de Fevereiro** in Luanda on 13 March.<sup>29</sup> The government has not commented on the incident, despite the highly public nature of the incident, which happened only four weeks after Angola took over as AU chair.<sup>30</sup>

Main opposition party **Uniao Nacional de Independencia Total de Angola (UNITA)** invited the various opposition parties to participate in discussions at the **Platform for African Democrats Forum** and celebrate UNITA's 59<sup>th</sup> anniversary.<sup>31</sup> The conference was backed by the **Oppenheimer family's Brenthurst Foundation**, based in **South Africa**, and **Germany's Friedrich Ebert Foundation** and was to run from 13 to 16 March.<sup>32</sup>

Some leaders detained included

- **Botswana's** former president **Ian Khama** (2008 – 2018);
- former **Colombian** president **Andrés Pastrana Arango** (1998–2002), who is now president of the **Belgium**-based **Christian Democratic International Information and Documentation Centre (CDI-IDC)**, which was one of the conference backers;
- **John Steenhuisen**, leader of South Africa's opposition **Democratic Alliance (DA)** party and current agriculture minister;
- **Venancio Mondlane**, member of parliament (MP) in **Mozambique's** primary opposition **RENAMO** party from 2020 to 2024;

<sup>23</sup> CE Noticias Financieras English, 11 Mar 2025

<sup>24</sup> Lusa, 25 Mar 2025

<sup>25</sup> Deutsche Welle, 13 Oct 2020

<sup>26</sup> OFAC, 9 Dec 2021

<sup>27</sup> Expansao, 27 Mar 2022

<sup>28</sup> Lusa, 25 Mar 2025

<sup>29</sup> The East African, 15 Mar 2025

<sup>30</sup> VOA Africa, 14 March 2025

<sup>31</sup> The East African, 15 Mar 2025

<sup>32</sup> The East African, 15 Mar 2025

- **Dorothy Semu**, leader of the **Tanzanian** opposition **ACT Wazalendo** party and Tanzanian presidential candidate;
- **Othman Masoud Othman**, ACT Wazalendo party chair and presidential candidate in **Zanzibar**.
- **Tundu Lissu**, head of Tanzania's main opposition party **Chadema**;
- **Edwin Sifuna**, secretary general of **Kenya's Orange Democratic Movement**, and senator of **Nairobi**;
- **Robert Kyagulanyi** (also known as **Bobbi Wine**), leader of **Uganda's** opposition **National Unity Platform**.<sup>33</sup>

Lissu cited Angola's immigration protocols as the cause of the denial of entry, noting that he and several others didn't require visas for entry to Angola. Sifuna said he had been refused entry by immigration despite having all the necessary documents. He was accompanied by two **Ukrainian** opposition politicians.<sup>34</sup>

UNITA claimed that Angola's authorities were behind the stoppage as part of a strategy to sabotage the anniversary by preventing its guests from attending. However, Lissu's view is also right, that immigration protocol was the issue, demanding different channels than a private visa for former presidents and sitting senior politicians. UNITA did not clarify whether it had notified the external relations ministry of the invitations it had extended.

### Planner

2020-2025 (**Angola**) **World Bank** to provide funding to increase economic diversification for five years;

Jun 2023 - Jun 2025 **Luanda (Angola)** Angola extends its mandate as member of the **Executive Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT)**;

2023-2026 (**Angola**) **Programa de Privatizações (PROPRIV)** (privatisation programme) extended to manage government divestment of 138 companies;

Feb 2025- Feb 2026 (**Angola**) President **Joao Lourenço** becomes chair of the **African Union (AU)**

7 - 9 Apr 2025 **Dakar (Senegal)** **Angola** and Senegal will hold the first edition of the **2025 Economic Forum** to stimulate intra-African trade within the framework of the **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)**

29 May 2025 **Lisbon (Portugal)** Trial of **Banco Espirito Santo Angola** directors **Helder Bataglia**, **Alvaro Sobrinho** and **Ricardo Salgado** on charges of money laundering, breach of trust and aggravated fraud, for granting about €4.8 billion in loans (\$5.18 billion) begins;

23- 27 Jun 2025 **Luanda (Angola)** **United States-Africa Business Summit**;

Q2-Q3 2025 **Cabinda (Angola)** **United Kingdom**-based Gemcorp's **Cabinda Refinery** says it will begin production;

Sept 2025 **Luanda (Angola)** Annual Oil and Gas Fair

1 -3 Oct 2025 **Cape Town (South Africa)** Angola to showcase 34 critical minerals at the **Invest in African Energy 2025** conference;

Dec 2025 **Cabinda (Angola)** Start of operations at deep-water port **Porto do Caio** is expected;

2025 **Luanda (Angola)** Privatisation of telecommunications company **UNITEL** and sale of government stakes in **Banco de Fomento Angola (BFA)** and **Standard Bank Ltd** to take place;

<sup>33</sup> Chanzo Reporter, 16 Jan 2025

<sup>34</sup> Agence France Presse, 13 Mar 2025

2025 Luanda (**Angola**) Angola to issue **Eurobonds** of at least \$1 billion this year, and possibly \$2 billion, with issue and maturity dates that avoid increased pressure on public debt;

2025 (**Angola**) Angola to begin exporting green hydrogen energy to **Germany**;

2025 **Luanda (Angola)** Completion of Angola's sole purpose-built gold refinery at **Viana** is expected;

## Chronology

25 Mar 2025 **Luanda (Angola)** *Daba Finance*. Angola removes diesel subsidies, raising pump prices by 50% from 200 kwanzas (\$0.22) per litre to 300 kwanzas (\$0.33) as part of an **International Monetary Fund**-backed plan to redirect public funds, freeing up \$3 billion;

24 Mar 2025 **Luanda (Angola)** *Angop*. Angola expresses support for **South Africa's** presidency of the **G20** at the **United Nation (UN)**;

24 Mar 2025 **Rome (Italy)** *United Nations World Food Programme*. The **United Nations World Food Programme (WFP)** welcomes a contribution of \$ 2m from **Japan**, to enhance food and water security for over 27,000 people affected by drought in southern Angola;

21 Mar 2025 **Washington DC (USA)** *World Bank*. The **World Bank** approves \$250m in financing for the **Angola Youth Employment Opportunities Project (AYEOP)** to support government in addressing barriers to wage jobs and entrepreneurship;

20 Mar 2025 **Luanda (Angola)** *Angop*. **African Union (AU) Commission** chair **Mahmoud Ali Youssouf** ends an official visit to the Angola during which he met with President **João Lourenço** in his capacity as AU chairperson, discussing Africa's peace and security priorities, with a particular focus on the situation in the **Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, and Somalia**;

19 Mar 2025 **Luanda (Angola)** *Angop*. Transport ministry launches a public tender for 20 year concession contracts to manage, operate and maintain port services at the maritime passenger and cargo terminals at the **Port of Cabinda** and the river terminal at the **Port of Soyo**;

19 Mar 2025 **Luanda (Angola)** *Mining Technology*. **United Kingdom**-headquartered rare earths developer **Pensana** confirms it has secured \$268m in funding for the development of its **Longonjo** rare earth project in Angola;

18 Mar 2025 **Luanda (Angola)** *Jornal de Angola*. State diamond mining company **Endiama** signs major contract with the Sultanate of **Oman's Taadeen** company to take over three projects from sanctioned **Russian** mining company **Alrosa** - the **Hidro-Chicapa** dam project, and two major mines, **Sociedade Mineira de Catoca** and **Luele**, with the latter two companies accounting for about 80% of diamond production in Angola;

14 Mar 2025 **Luanda (Angola)** *New Business Ethiopia*. **Agência Nacional de Petróleo, Gás e Biocombustíveis (ANPG)** (national agency for petroleum, gas and biofuels) executive administrator **Alcides Andrade** says that Angola has secured over \$60 billion in commitments for oil and gas projects over the next five years;

14 Mar 2025 **Luanda (Angola)** *Angop*. Secretary of state for climate action and sustainable development **Nascimento Soares** says Angola needs robust systems to accurately measure greenhouse gas emissions in the energy sector;

13 Mar 2025 **Luanda (Angola)** *Afrobarometer*. A new poll shows most Angolans think the government should reduce the number of foreign job seekers and refugees it allows to enter the country, though 41% say **Southern Africans** should be free to move across borders to work and live, while 38% disagree;

12 Mar 2025 **Luanda (Angola)** *Angop*. Foreign minister **Téte António** announces that Angola plans to hold a summit on financing infrastructure on the African continent, with a view to industrial development;

11 Mar 2025 **Luanda (Angola)** *Business Monitor*. **United Kingdom**-headquartered **Fitch Solutions** says it holds a cautious outlook for Angolan consumer spending during 2025, with cooler inflation and a more dovish approach from the **Banco Nacional de Angola (BNA)** (central bank) allowing for improved purchasing power, though further kwanza weakness and social risks will weigh on consumer sentiment over the year;

11 Mar 2025 **Luanda (Angola)** *Angop*. Health ministry registers 83 new cases of cholera in the provinces of **Luanda, Bengo, Benguela, Icolo and Bengo and Malanje**, bringing total cases since the beginning of the outbreak in January to 6,651 cases, with over half in Luanda;

10 Mar 2025 **Gaborone (Botswana)** *Sunday Standard*. **Botswana** announces a wildlife relocation initiative, donating elephants to Angola as part of a broader effort to restore ecosystems and promote cross-border conservation, and facilitate the migration of elephants from Botswana via the **Cuando River** corridor;

10 Mar 2025 **Luanda (Angola)** *Radio Nacional De Angola*. Angola's national development plan for 2025 is approved by presidential decree, with improving the business environment in Angola and contributing to the stabilisation of prices of essential goods as priorities;

10 Mar 2025 **Luanda (Angola)** *Radio Nacional De Angola*. The trial of six nationals accused of planning terrorist acts during the visit of former **United States (US)** president **Joe Biden** to Angola in November last year begins in the **Huambo Provincial District Court**;

07 Mar 2025 **Luanda (Angola)** *Angop*. Angola and the **United Kingdom** analyse ways to strengthen bilateral relations with a view to deepening cooperation and strategic alignment between the two countries, including the regional and multilateral agendas;

03 Mar 2025 **Luanda (Angola)** *Pharma & Healthcare Monitor Worldwide*. **Vietnam's** ambassador to Angola **Duong Chinh Chuc** announces that Vietnam and **Cuba** are strengthening their medical collaboration in Angola with a newly signed agreement between the Vietnamese embassy in Angola and Cuba's **Meditex General Clinic**;

28 Feb 2025 **Luanda (Angola)** *Agence de Presse Africaine*. Angola is in the final stages of joining the **Southern African Development Community (SADC) Free Trade Area (FTA)**, which once formalised will make Angola the 14<sup>th</sup> member of the SADC FTA, marking a significant milestone in the bloc's trade liberalisation efforts.

27 Feb 2025 **Luanda (Angola)** *Angop*. **Banco Nacional de Angola (BNA)** (central bank) deputy governor **Domingos Pedro** calls for the establishment of a regulatory and supervisory framework that ensures common financial stability among the member states of the **Southern African Development Community (SADC)**;

27 Feb 2025 **Cape Town (South Africa)** *Sweet Crude*. Angola is aiming to increase diamond production to 17.53 million carats by 2027 as part of its 2023 – 2027 national development plan;

26 Feb 2025 **Luanda (Angola)** *Angop*. Foreign affairs minister **Téte António** and **United States (US)** chargé d'affaires in Angola, **James Story** meet to discuss deepening of economic cooperation, mainly attracting investment between Angola and the US;

25 Feb 2025 **Luanda (Angola)** *Angop*. Foreign affairs minister **Téte António** meets **Russian** ambassador to Angola, **Vladimir Tararov**, to address issues on the bilateral agenda including the exchange of visits at the highest level, the strengthening of political-diplomatic relations and increased Russian investments in Angola;

20 Feb 2025 **Luanda (Angola)** *Angop*. National assembly confirms **Amélia Augusta Varela** and **Emiliana Margareth Morais Nanga Covie** as new judge advisors of the constitutional court which is composed of 11 judges the president appoints;

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