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Charity Registration Number: 208223

## Transcript Q&A

# Angola's External Relations in Africa

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20 February 2012

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**Alex Vines:**

Minister, thank you very much. [Applause] We've got roving microphones now, so I'll take a cluster of questions. Minister, you can stay there, or, if you want to, you can sit down and answer questions as you wish.

Where is our microphone on this side? Is there a question over in this corner? Okay, the gentleman there. If you can introduce yourself also, and keep your question short.

**Question 1:**

First of all, I need to thank Mr Chikoti just got a medal [uncertain] last year she called the formal leader in the parliament and as we know, Mr Chikoti was a UNITA [National Union for the Total Independence of Angola] member and a deserter [uncertain] of UNITA in 1992 before the first general elections, and joined one of the parties that no longer exists. Now, today, we know, Mr Chikoti is a member of MPLA [People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola] and for all you said after deserting UNITA party in 1992. And today, your wife, the former leader of UNITA in parliament resigned all her activity. My question is: is your desire or [incoherent] project to pulverise the UNITA party? Those are my questions. And my second question...

**Alex Vines:**

One question for the moment; no, let's go around, and if there is time we'll move to a second question. There is another question here, we'll take a cluster.

**Question 2:**

Thank you. Your Excellency, thank you for welcoming us to Angola, though the word says you have the most expensive pizza in the world over there. [Laughter] I just wanted to ask a quick question, you spoke about the commitment of Angola in fighting against apartheid in South Africa, and your leadership role in SADC at the moment. What are you going to do to prevent possible violence in the upcoming elections in Zim[babwe] regardless of whether they take place this year or next year? Thank you.

**Alex Vines:**

Is there a third question in this...? Okay, the gentleman just here.

**Question 3:**

Thank you very much, Mr Minister. Listening to you it is striking to see that Angola is such an incredible success story, not only because the new Miss Universe is from Angola [laughter], but after 25 years of civil war you managed to secure stable peace. Angola is also a force for regional peace in Africa. And, it is also an incredible success story when you look at the economic figures of the last ten years. However, this story remains largely unknown both in the US, in Europe, but also in emerging markets. So, what is your plan to make this story known, and then foster the development of your country? Thank you.

**Alex Vines:**

Minister?

**HE Georges Rebelo Chikoti:**

Well, I will answer everything the most, or the best I can. First, the details you have are not right. I did not run away or abandon UNITA, or betray UNITA; but, even if this was the case, I think everyone of us has the right to situate themselves in Angola or elsewhere they way he wants. I left actually UNITA when I was still younger and a student in France. I believed that the struggle was wrong, I believed that a party... Angola was independent in 1975, and therefore there was no need for war in Angola after 1975, that is a personal conviction.

Then, the second one is that people marry with the people they love [laughter], and they don't politicise [applause]. I don't question other people's sentiment. Me [sic] and Miss Ala [uncertain] are childhood friends, we grew up together, and we remained and we felt that we should marry; and it is just as simple as that. And she left parliament, it is her right; I know maybe you are not happy, but people have got the right of choice, and very democratic indeed, and she has the right to do what she feels like doing. I think that is the best I can do, people marry because they love the people they get married to. Even if politics should come into my family, I'm not ready to take that, neither

is my wife. Unfortunately, she should be here, she came with me to London and if she were here it would give her an opportunity to talk. [Laughter]

So, I think we should be constructive, we should look into the future. I believe that the future in Angola will be a country where people, may they be of UNITA, may they be of the MPLA, they will look towards a common goal. I was telling members of parliament today that I was sitting in a room where there was an opposition leader, there was the minister of foreign affairs, there was somebody from the coalition government, and they were talking on a common interest in Angola. This is the most retarding statement I have heard because in Angola nobody blamed me for marrying with Miss Ala as if it's a shambles. But I think we have to contribute to peace we need marriages of people coming from different political backgrounds, different ethnic groups, and different sensitivities.

I'm not confused about love, I fall in love with the lady, I don't care if she comes from the north or the south, if she is in MPLA or UNITA if it is in Angola. I believe that is a way of contributing to peace, and fortunately enough during my marriage the vice president of UNITA was there, President dos Santos was there, and there was no fighting. [Laughter and applause]. And there was champagne for everybody. [Laughter] General Gato was there, he is my good friend and cousin, and I think that is how we should look to the future.

When I went into... when I left UNITA, I was young and frustrated, I wanted something different, I found the [incoherent] party, but I still feel that today President dos Santos has contributed more to reconciliation than anyone else. Some people were saying, 'no, you're married to a UNITA woman, you're going to be fired.' I said, 'fine, but this is the lady I love.' There are also people who thought, 'you are losing your position,' but my problem was that is the lady I wanted. And just to tell my friend, when you have principles and you love somebody you go for her, you don't care if she is, whichever colour, or whichever political party. And I think that, certainly, my union to Miss Ala can help bringing peace in the minds and in the homes of many people, particularly for those who understand us, and they are many, maybe a majority.

Now, what [would] happen in Zimbabwe if there was war in the case of an election? I think that SADC has principles, and we will all abide by them. If there was war in Zimbabwe after the elections, then it will be reasonable that SADC finds a solution of stopping that war and come back to a peaceful settlement of a conflict in Zimbabwe. I think that countries like Angola, or

South Africa, or any other one has the means of doing that. We have a standby force, or we have a joint chief of staff, on which we will all agree. Which means that if there is war or a conflict in one country, the others will sit under an organ called the organ on politics, defence and security. This organ is presided right now by President Zuma. This organ will analyse the situation, and will submit a position to President dos Santos, who is the chair of SADC, then, whichever decision they take will be the one that they implement if that will imply sending troops to stop war, or it implies civilians or diplomats to solve the political crisis. What I can say is there is a lot of maturity in the SADC region – we are probably the most stable region right now in Africa. We have a very committed number of leaders, and political institutions within SADC that allow us to take the best position possible to solve any crisis.

And, as rightly said, I think the third question is also linked to peace and stability. And, indeed, when you look at the record of Angola, we have always worked with our neighbours to bring peace, and we have done it across... we did it with the [Democratic] Republic of Congo, we did it with DRC, we are doing it with Guinea-Bissau now, and we think that security and stability is crucial for development of our region and of Africa at large.

**Alex Vines:**

Thank you. Let us take a few more questions. There is a lady here...

**Question 4:**

Thanks. You talked about the relations with the DRC, and positive relations recently, involvement in elections and stability and so on, and I wondered if that meant the DRC is no longer pursuing a re-adjustment of the maritime border with Angola, and has that situation been resolved?

**Alex Vines:**

Thank you. And there is a question right at the back there.

**Question 5:**

Thank you very much for your talk, Mr Minister. I was particularly interested in, perhaps, your take on the economic side and what regional trade can perhaps do for your relations with your neighbours?

**Alex Vines:**

Thank you. Is there another question in the corner around there? No. Over here on the left? No. There is one there, we'll get the third question there.

**Question Six:**

Yes. My question appeals a little bit on Lady Margret Antsee's keynote speech. I think one of the highlights on that was the peace dividend for the normal Angolans. So, my question is: there is clear evidence that the country is seeking to gain more of a political and military stronghold in the region. So then, is this interest, which is proper of the state as a self-interested entity in the region, is this power seeking from the Angolan government, or the Angolan state, does it equal some sort of restraints of domestic politics? And, also, what are the possible factors domestically that could possibly undermine these interests by the Angolan state to seek regional power?

**Alex Vines:**

Thank you. Ah, we have some more questions. Well, we'll go one more round after this.

**HE Georges Rebelo Chikoti:**

Yes, well, the issue with the DRC is simple. We have a joint commission that has been working on this issue. The DRC is a land-locked country, but they have some 45km of coast, and therefore when you take the angles, the way borders are drawn is that they made a direct line from one point or the other and they went into our territory. When you take Cabinda and the rest of the Angolan continent [sic], there is an area where borders will meet in the ocean; that means Cabinda coming from one side, Congo [DRC] coming from one side, and Angola on the other side. So, if someone decides unilaterally to draw a line, then there is risk for a mistake. However, this has been presented to the Commission of the Law of the Sea in the United Nations. The process will take a long time. But there are also bilateral negotiations between Angola and the republic of... the DRC. I think that the question is oil, here.

So it is our view in terms of policy that in those areas where we feel our borders meet somewhere then we need to work together; and if there is oil, we drill oil together. If one intends that everything belongs to him, then there is risk of conflict, and I think that we are all mature enough to avoid that, so

there is a good environment of cooperation and talking. And we have been working on that until last December. We hope that we will have good results towards the end, results that will satisfy all sides.

No, naturally for a country like Angola – I am going into the second and third questions – the major challenge for Angola today is economic reconstruction. You know, we are looking at a country which has lost so many years. And there is no doubt, when you look at our policies since 2002, we have been looking at partners who can build with us very quickly some of the basic infrastructure that Angola needs. And we have done fairly well, not only with our partners of the European Union, with Portugal, we have done it... we are doing it with the United States, we are doing it with companies from the United Kingdom, we are doing it with China, also, and in major economic projects or infrastructural projects. We have, so far, been able to rebuild in full the railway line from Luanda to Malanje. We are rebuilding the Benguela railway from Benguela to Dilola, which is the last... not Dilola, Luau. And we hope that this one will finish will finish in 2013 or 2014. So far, the railway can go as far as Kuito, which is already about 600km or 700km into the hinterland.

And you are all aware that Angola is very big, and some of these infrastructures are extremely expensive and they take time. But, most of the road infrastructure, you can today drive from Luanda to Cuango, you can drive from Luanda to Uige, you can drive from Luanda to Malanje, you can drive almost in all major areas of Angola. So, most of the road infrastructure that we inherited from Portugal are almost rehabilitated. We may only need the one from Saurimo to Luena, and the one from Kuito to Luena as well. So, things are pretty much working as far as we are concerned.

Now, the last question; I don't think that Angola is seeking to be a regional power, but I think that it is a consequence of the war. You have a country which went through war, and which had to rebuild itself from its own capacity. And, naturally, while we had our own civil war, we had a lot of diversity with some of our neighbours, and actually that made us a little bit bold and strong. And we are not an expansive power, but we do cooperate with others in our regional mechanism, in SADC, with the United Nations. When I say that we are helping Guinea-Bissau, it is not just because we want to be there; it is with the CPLP countries, it is with the United Nations, and this is the kind of cooperation we are looking at. And, you cannot totally say that because we went through war we demobilise everything, and we only do economic reconstruction, and so we are very balanced.

**Alex Vines:**

Thank you, Minister. Final questions, very quickly, please introduce yourself. Yep?

**Question 7:**

Building on the previous question of promoting the outstanding economic success story of Angola as a model for development; and, as you mentioned, bilateral relations with China have been a key part in that story. Retrospectively, what lessons have you learned from that relationship that you would share with your regional counterparts seeking to foster positive relations and investment from China?

**Question 8:**

Recently Angola is moving towards the internationalisation of the Angolan companies, in particular Sonangol. My question to you, Mr Minister is, if the Angola government... your strategy is to influence other countries in Africa because of your... because of your... how can I say...because of your political power?

**Question 9:**

Thanks. It draws on that mention of Sonangol, actually. There has been some concern recently in the oil industry about the government's insistence on foreign oil investors taking small local partners seemingly with no – little or no – experience in the industry, and seemingly with connections to government officials, and being obliged to give these small companies stakes in blocks, such as [incoherent], and others. I just wonder if you can enlighten us as to why there is this insistence on these companies being brought in on those blocks?

**Alex Vines:**

Okay, and the lady over there, and that is it.



**Question 10:**

Thank you. I believe 2012 is an election year in Angola; and I wonder if the minister can share his views on how the elections will affect Angola's domestic and foreign policies?

**Alex Vines:**

Thank you very much, sorry we have run out of time.

**HE Georges Rebelo Chikoti:**

Well, China. Well, I think a lot has been said about China, but we were maybe the last country, among the last countries to cooperate with China. When we got to China we had many companies from the European Union, many companies across the country... across the world cooperating with China. So, I think there are tangible opportunities that one can get from China. One of them is capital, the other one is cheap and qualified labour. So, Angola wanted to go fast. We came to the European union, Angola needed about \$2.5billion to engage in the reconstruction process, we couldn't get them. Because, well, it was the feeling in Europe then that Angola was rich and with many resources, but we were bankrupt when we came to the end of the war.

So, what did China provide? China provided a line of credit, which allowed us to initiate that... the challenges we have. And, no country has been able to build the number of infrastructures we have been able to build in such a short time. And we have been able to do that because of China. We did not have the manpower, we did not have the capital, but we had the projects. They have the money, and they have the manpower. So, our interests met. And we are paying for that, we are paying, it is... But in the end it is not only China who is Angola, people get very much 'well, Angola is with China', but maybe there are more Chinese projects across Europe, or even in the United States when you look at how much money China spends in the United States. So, I think we should be fair, we should balance that.

And there is opportunity still, there are many opportunities for anyone who has a skill to sell, or who has a project to realise. We have so many projects that we need to build and very, very quickly. So I think we should look at it in a balanced way, and in a positive manner as well. And, that is basically it, but we have many other strong partners, we have got Brazil, all of your countries... or, well, at least many companies from the UK also are involved.

Well, the internationalisation of Sonangol, I think this is not a problem. I think all companies today they want to grow, they want to make money. And the opportunities are there, and Sonangol is just doing what any other company in Britain would be doing. And, so, we are getting involved across, and in many other areas.

Well, smaller companies, smaller oil companies that are, or might need to, or asking for... to get into major with foreign companies, I think maybe there are people... there aren't many Angolan oil companies, but eventually if they may wish to go in there, they would need the experience of companies that have some experience. I don't think it is wrong, as such, as a process, because people need experience, will need to share capital, and some of the companies that come in there, some companies have more experience. So, it is not wrong. It would be wrong if they were obliged to do that, I think, but they are not obliged to do that. Sometimes, eventually, we may say there are companies which are available, which would like to acquire that experience.

Now, the consequences of the elections. I think the elections will take place, there will be no problem. We don't anticipate any major problem, we are preparing them well; we are improving all the time. We had elections in 2008, we are going to have them again now. And, as we continue to repeat the electoral processes, I think that we will become mature and bolder to run elections. It is not an easy process, but I think that it will effect neither the economic growth, nor our will to make Angola a good environment for business. I think that the elections will not affect our policies, nor our will to go forward with a good environment for investment for anyone who wants to do that.

**Alex Vines:**

Thank you, Minister, I think that is a very appropriate moment to finish. And I think we just should show our appreciation of your time here. Thank you.