



Seminar Summary Report “An Analysis of the Elections in Angola”

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The seminar aimed to analyze the significance and challenges of the September 2008 parliamentary election in Angola. In this regard, the speaker Paula Roque, a Researcher with ISS African Security Analysis Programme (ASAP) gave a brief introduction on the historical and current Angolan political dynamics. She recalled how Angola has been dominated by a highly centralized state structure and recurring periods of civil war that destroyed the country's democratic institutions. Therefore, the recent election in Angola is very crucial because of the fact that it is the first election held after 1992 in 16 years, and it is expected to be a step forward for strengthening democratic processes in the country. As a result, the legislative elections in Angola, on 5th September 2008, saw the ruling MPLA win a landslide victory with 82% of the vote, while UNITA managed to get a mere 10.5% of the vote. The PRS and FNLA parties got only 3% and 1% respectively.

The polls provided an important opportunity for Angolans to experience elections as a constructive exercise of their citizenship rights, as a fundamental step towards the consolidation of peace and reconciliation, and the beginning of a new chapter in the country's history. Nevertheless, the low representation of opposition parties in the election was explained by the speaker as divided political parties. The opposition parties are very fragmented

and lack the ability to move forward as a party, which resulted to even further fragmentations within themselves. This made them to be no match for the strong and resourceful ruling party MPLA. Most of the opposition party could not even manage to represent their strong hold constituencies.

While analysing the time of the polling day, on the 5th of September 2008, the speaker noted that there had been tensions witnessed in some areas of the country, especially in Luanda where around 2.3 million voters have been registered. This was due to the fact that 320 polling stations in Luanda didn't open due to logistical problems.

With regard to shortcomings in the election process, the speaker further noted that there had been problems of manipulation of medias by the ruling MPLA; and also concerns with the composition and impartiality of the National Electoral Commission. Furthermore, lack of sufficient personnel as well as logistics was witnessed among international observer teams to cover the whole process.

Moreover, during the discussion session, issues of problem with the Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) were also raised. It has been argued that the DDR process in Angola was not effectively done. To this matter, families of ex-combatants were not properly reintegrated within the society, which shows that there is still lack of community healing. In addition to this, the fact that there is a huge mismanagement of the country's wealth and that the majority of the population in Angola is suffering from poverty, will eventually threatens the country's sustainable peace. Therefore, in order to prevent violence in the post election period, it is argued that the African community needs to appeal to the government of Angola, in order to work with the interest of all parties in Angola; and make sure that the oppositions' voice will be heard no matter how small it is.

Finally, there seem to be an understanding that the 2008 Angolan legislative

election is short of being referred to as free and fair. However, despite the organizational difficulties, the political process in Angola was a real step forward for democracy. The speaker also stressed that both the ruling party and opposition parties need to work together to ensure the organizational difficulties will not be repeated in the upcoming 2009 presidential election.