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# Angola: Key Developments and U.S. Relations

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**Nicolas Cook**  
Specialist in African Affairs

## Angola and U.S. Relations

The Biden Administration, which has emphasized global strategic competition in its *2022 U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa*, has pursued high-level engagement with the Angolan government. It has done so in that strategic context and, as a January 2024 State Department fact sheet stated, with regard to such bilateral goals as “expanding economic prosperity and energy access, upholding democracy and human rights, and advancing regional security.” The U.S. Secretaries of State and Defense visited Angola, in 2024 and 2023, respectively, and President Joe Biden and Angolan President João Lourenço met at the White House in 2023. A planned mid-October 2024 trip to Angola by President Biden, his first trip to Africa as president, was postponed on October 8 so that he could oversee federal responses to Hurricanes Milton and Helene, the White House reported. The trip, now slated for early December 2024, is to center on trade and investment linkages, democracy and civic engagement, climate change and clean energy issues, and peace and security. Angola also is a nascent U.S. security partner. In 2023, the United States and Angola, which has expressed interest in procuring U.S. military materiel, agreed to establish a joint defense cooperation committee, which held its first meeting in June 2024.

Another U.S. priority and goal of the President’s announced trip is to highlight investments by the United States in the rail-centered Lobito Corridor project, a signature Group of Seven (G7) Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGI) initiative; several other governments and African regional financial institutions also are providing financing. U.S. support to date has focused on financing upgrades to an extant Angolan rail line, the Lobito Atlantic Railway (LAR), the Port of Lobito on the Atlantic coast, and a LAR-linked rail segment in neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); the provision of a range of development investments along the corridor in Angola; and funding for an environmental and social impact assessment for a proposed new LAR branch rail line into Zambia. The President also may spotlight other sizable U.S. infrastructure investments in Angola under the auspices of PGI, including two large-scale solar energy-centered projects. Aggregate U.S. financing and technical assistance for Angola-centered PGI projects stands at \$3.46 billion. U.S. bilateral assistance for Angola has mostly gone toward health, primarily the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and President’s Malaria Initiative, and areas such as governance capacity-building, conservation, and local development.

Oil-rich Angola emerged from a 26-year civil war in 2002. The main parties to the conflict, the then-single party state controlled by the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), and the rebel National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), today are the governing and main opposition parties, respectively. U.S.-Angola relations were once cool, due to MPLA ties with the Soviet Union and U.S. Cold War-era backing for UNITA’s insurgency against the MPLA state. Relations gradually improved after Angola’s civil war, and grew closer in the early 2010s, when an ongoing Strategic Partnership Dialogue was established. Ties have strengthened significantly during President Lourenço’s tenure (2017-present). Angola also retains close ties to Russia and the People’s Republic of China.

Warming U.S.-Angolan bilateral relations are not without complications. Angola has a history of semi-autocratic governance and public corruption, and human rights abuses attributed to state security forces. Such issues may prove challenging to address, though the United States has sought to do so through governance and assistance programs and by sanctioning selected Angolan actors assessed to have engaged in corruption. Congress has helped shape U.S.-Angola relations by authorizing and appropriating funds for bilateral aid, security cooperation, and development finance, and by engaging in oversight of U.S. PGI and Lobito Corridor investments and via direct engagement with Angolan officials. In 2010, Angola also featured prominently in a Senate oversight report and hearing on preventing foreign corruption in the United States.

The Lourenço administration has emphasized efforts to counter corruption, though some observers have questioned the focus and impact of such efforts. Many of the highest-profile targets of these government efforts have been relatives and associates of Lourenço’s late predecessor, José Eduardo dos Santos (in office 1979-2017), and while Angola has improved its standing in international assessments of graft, polling indicates that many Angolans view corruption as persistent or growing. The Lourenço government also has sought to enact economic reforms to diversify the oil export-reliant economy, attract investment, and generate broad-based growth. To date, success under the current government has been mixed, as suggested by variable and often negative economic growth rates. While Angola’s gross domestic product is among the 10 largest in Africa, structural economic challenges, poverty, unmet socioeconomic needs, and income inequality have persisted.

Angola is arguably an increasingly influential country within Africa. Since the mid-2010s, Angola has played a role in regional conflict mediation in eastern DRC. Since 2022, President Lourenço has been designated by the African Union and International Conference on the Great Lakes Region to mediate such efforts, in particular talks between DRC and Rwanda.

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## Overview

Angola, an oil-rich country on southern Africa's Atlantic coast, emerged from a 26-year civil war in 2002. The main belligerents, the then-single party state controlled by the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), and the rebel National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), are today the governing and main opposition parties, respectively. U.S.-Angola relations once were cool, in part due to the lingering effects of MPLA ties with the Soviet Union and U.S. Cold War-era backing for UNITA's insurgency against the MPLA state. Relations gradually improved after Angola's civil war ended, grew closer in the early 2010s, when an ongoing Strategic Partnership Dialogue was established, and have strengthened significantly during President João Lourenço's tenure (2017-present). Angola also retains close ties to Russia and the People's Republic of China (PRC or China).

The Biden Administration, which has emphasized global strategic competition in its 2022 *U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa* and related documents, has pursued high-level engagement with the Lourenço government. President Joe Biden and President Lourenço met at the White House in 2023, Lloyd Austin became the first U.S. Secretary of Defense to visit Angola (also in 2023), and Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited Angola in early 2024. In late September 2024, the White House announced that President Biden would travel to Angola October 13-15, 2024. On October 8, President Biden postponed the trip so that he could oversee federal responses to Hurricanes Milton and Helene, according to a White House release. The White House later rescheduled the trip for the first week of December 2024.<sup>1</sup> During his visit to Angola, President Biden is slated to discuss with President Lourenço

increased collaboration on shared priorities, including bolstering our economic partnerships that keep our companies competitive and protect workers;... strengthening democracy and civic engagement; intensifying action on climate security and the clean energy transition; and enhancing [regional] peace and security.<sup>2</sup>

During his trip, the President also is slated to highlight U.S. investment contributions to the Group of Seven's (G7) Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (abbreviated PGI, and sometimes PGII) signature rail-centered Lobito Corridor project, "which advances our joint vision for Africa's first trans-continental open-access rail network that starts in [the Angolan port of] Lobito and ultimately will connect the Atlantic Ocean to the Indian Ocean." The White House said the visit "celebrates the evolution of the U.S.-Angola relationship, underscores the United States' continued commitment to African partners, and demonstrates" the mutual benefits of U.S.-African collaboration "to solve shared challenges."<sup>3</sup> The planned visit also would fulfill President Biden's pledge to visit Africa by the end of his term, set out during a late 2022 address to African heads of state at the Administration's U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to supporting the Lobito Corridor, the United States is providing several large loans to the Angolan government and U.S. and local firms to build bridges and health, water, and large-scale solar power generation infrastructure. Angola's significance to the United States also stems from its mediation role in several conflicts in central Africa, its status as one of sub-Saharan Africa's largest economies, and its role as a nascent U.S. security partner. These warming ties,

<sup>1</sup> White House statements on September 24, 2024, October 8, 2024, and October 16, 2024, all entitled "Statement from White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre on President Biden's Travel to Germany and Angola."

<sup>2</sup> White House, "Statement from White House Press Secretary," September 24, 2024.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> White House, "Remarks by President Biden at the U.S.-Africa Summit Leaders Session on Partnering on the African Union's Agenda 2063," December 15, 2022.

however, are not without complications; Angola's history of semi-autocratic governance and public corruption, and human rights abuses attributed to state security forces could pose challenges in bilateral relations, as may Angolan ties to China and Russia.<sup>5</sup>

Congress has helped shape U.S.-Angola relations by authorizing and appropriating funds for bilateral assistance, security cooperation, and development finance, and by engaging in oversight of U.S. PGI and Lobito Corridor investments and through direct engagement with Angolan officials or civil society members.

### Historical Background and Implications

Angola's decades-long armed struggle for liberation from Portugal ended at independence in 1975, but was followed by a more than quarter-century civil war that may have caused hundreds of thousands of deaths, though estimates vary widely. The civil war, which lasted until 2002, was initially a local conflict over control of the state, but later became a Cold War proxy conflict influenced by outside powers, including the United States, which backed UNITA for a time. The legacy of these highly destructive conflicts has receded over time, but continues to shape Angolan politics and society. Ties between the then-socialist MPLA and the Soviet Union and the PRC during the struggle for independence and civil war laid the groundwork Angola's relationships today. U.S. and concurrent apartheid-era South African military support for UNITA during Angola's civil war for a period resulted in sometimes skeptical post-war Angolan official attitudes toward the United States during much of the 1979-2017 tenure of the late José Eduardo dos Santos, President Lourenço's predecessor.

The MPLA's military vanquishment of UNITA helped the party to maintain and to leverage its nearly continuous post-independence control of the state for the benefit of its members, despite a technical transition to multiparty politics in 1992. That year, an election designed to cap a peace process and end the war was boycotted by UNITA. Fighting then continued until 2002, when the government assassinated UNITA's leader, Jonas Savimbi. A post-war MPLA-UNITA national unity government, produced by a return to the earlier abortive peace process, ended after long-delayed multiparty elections in 2008 and a resumption of the MPLA's sole control of the executive branch.<sup>6</sup>

## Lourenço Administration

In 2017, President dos Santos retired from the presidency after 38 years in office. This led to Angola's first electoral presidential transition; his chosen successor, then-Defense Minister João Lourenço, was elected president that year. The government of Lourenço, who was reelected in 2022, faces a raft of challenges, including weak economic growth, widespread poverty, and high unemployment. High income inequality, lack of social mobility, and curbs on civil liberties, among other issues, have sometimes spurred protests, particularly among the roughly 75% of Angolans aged 30 or below. Other enduring challenges include a long history of public sector corruption and opacity in state spending. Upon assuming office, Lourenço pledged to address all of these issues, along with inefficient state monopolies, burdensome regulations, and lack of economic diversification. His government has enacted a range of legal and economic liberalization reforms. Since assuming the leadership of the MPLA in 2018 from dos Santos, he also has asserted control over the party. While Lourenço was a protégé of dos Santos, who was immune from prosecution and died in 2022 in Spain, Lourenço has systematically sidelined many former dos Santos officials and family members.

The government's anti-corruption efforts, which appear partially aimed at attracting foreign investment, have targeted top former dos Santos political associates and relatives, alongside

<sup>5</sup> On such Administration policies regarding such issues, see White House, *U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa*, August 2022, "Fact Sheet: U.S. Strategy on Countering Corruption," December 6, 2021, and "Fact Sheet: Announcing the Presidential Initiative for Democratic Renewal," December 9, 2021, among others.

<sup>6</sup> Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame, "Lusaka Protocol" and "Powersharing Transitional Government: Luena Memorandum of Understanding," *Peace Accords Matrix*.

multiple mid-level officials.<sup>7</sup> In 2018, the government created a National Asset Recovery Service and a special Interior Ministry corruption prosecution unit, and released a national anti-corruption strategy. The state also repealed a requirement that foreign investors work with a local partner, a reputed vehicle for corruption, and is pursuing varied privatization reforms, such as sales to private firms or liquidations of state-owned enterprises (SOEs), including Sonangol, the state oil firm. SOEs historically have sometimes acted as a channel for patronage and contract steering.<sup>8</sup> Angola also has enacted new or revised money laundering and financial crime laws. In 2022, the national prosecutor reported that there were over 3,000 active corruption and financial crime cases and that the state had recovered \$20 billion in illicitly acquired assets.<sup>9</sup> Transparency International's *Corruption Perceptions Index* (CPI) ranking for Angola has improved from 167 of 180 countries scored in 2017, when Lourenço became president, to 121 in 2023 (the latest).

**Figure 1. Map: Angola with Lobito Atlantic Railway and Planned Zambia Branch**



**Source/Notes:** Graphic created by CRS. Map features are illustrative and are not legally authoritative.

Some analysts view Lourenço as evincing a genuine commitment to tackling entrenched interests and advancing governance, economic, and transparency reforms, while others, including Angolan poll respondents, have questioned his track record.<sup>10</sup> At issue have been indications of corruption

<sup>7</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, “A Conversation With President João Lourenço of Angola,” September 23, 2019; VOA, “Is Angola’s Anti-Corruption Drive Real or Cosmetic?,” January 10, 2020; and U.S. Department of State (DOS), *2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Angola*.

<sup>8</sup> Control Risks, “The Reputational Impact of the Luanda Leaks,” April 17, 2020; and *Financial Times*, “Spotlight Falls on Cobalt’s Angola Partner,” April 15, 2012.

<sup>9</sup> DOS, “Angola,” *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*; *Verangola*, “PGR Assumes Priority in the Fight Against Economic Financial Crime,” March 30, 2021; and Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), “Corruption Reform Drive Will Not Be Easy,” February 19, 2019.

<sup>10</sup> DOS, “Angola,” *2024 Investment Climate Statements*; Africa Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS), *The Challenges of Reform in Angola*, 2020; Paula Cristina Roque, *Angola’s New President: Reforming to Survive*, Inst. for Security Studies, 2020; and Rafael Marques de Morais, “Justice Capture in Angola,” *Makaangola.org*, December 13, 2022.



within Angola’s highest judicial institutions,<sup>11</sup> public perceptions of rising or static levels of corruption during his tenure,<sup>12</sup> and allegedly selective prosecutions or other favoritism toward some of his own political associates and relatives in alleged graft cases.<sup>13</sup> Prominent prosecution targets have included dos Santos’s daughter and former head of Sonangol, Isabel dos Santos—once reputedly Africa’s richest woman—and his son José Filomeno dos Santos, the former head of Angola’s sovereign wealth fund (SWF). Isabel dos Santos faces multiple corruption-linked criminal charges in Angola and has fought lawsuits in Angola and abroad aimed at freezing or seizing portions of her large, diverse business assets, to mixed effect. Some of these assets were allegedly derived from nepotistic transfers of state wealth by her father, which she denies.<sup>14</sup> José Filomeno dos Santos, along with an associate, was charged with misappropriating SWF funds and in 2020 was convicted in a separate \$500 million embezzlement case alongside an ex-central bank governor. Angola’s constitutional court voided his sentence in 2024.<sup>15</sup>

The Angolan presidency (i.e., the president and his top advisors) has historically wielded extensive and often direct control over public institutions and security forces, which has historically allowed the executive to protect its own interests and influence the state and society. This has remained true under Lourenço, though arguably to a moderately lesser extent than under dos Santos, though internal decisionmaking dynamics have remained relatively opaque.<sup>16</sup> In September 2024, President Lourenço signed into law a measure on the vandalism of public goods and disruptions of public services, and a separate national security law. Human Rights Watch (HRW) asserts that both laws “fail to meet international human rights standards and will severely restrict freedoms of the media, expression, and association.”<sup>17</sup>

## 2022 Elections

Parliamentary elections were last held in 2022 and are next slated to be held in 2027. In 2022, the MPLA obtained 51% of votes and 124 of 220 seats. While the MPLA lost 26 seats relative to the 2017 elections, its continuing majority control resulted in Lourenço’s reelection by default under Angola’s constitutional system, in which the majority party’s most senior member becomes

<sup>11</sup> *Africa Report*, “Angola: Judicial System Lifts the Lid on Corruption Catastrophe,” April 4, 2023; and Rafael Marques de Morais, “Felon Appointed as Supreme Court Justice of Angola,” *Makaangola.org*, July 10, 2023.

<sup>12</sup> Afrobarometer, “Angolans See Growing Corruption, Government Failure to Contain It,” April 17, 2023.

<sup>13</sup> *Africa Confidential*, “Discontent Takes Wing,” June 29, 2018 (regarding Lourenço’s brother’s role in a state aircraft procurement); *Africanews*, “‘Thieves should not stay in power’: Angolans want president’s top aide fired for corruption,” October 4, 2020; Reuters, “Portugal Lets Angola Try Ex-Vp in Graft Case, Hopes to Improve Ties,” May 10, 2018, and CE NoticiasFinancieras, “Angola is still waiting for Dubai to notify Isabel dos Santos,” July 30, 2024 (on case against former vice president and head of state oil firm Sonangol Manuel Vicente); and *Africa Intelligence*, “Lourenço tainted by anti-corruption probe into top adviser dos Anjos,” May 4, 2021.

<sup>14</sup> BBC *Panorama*, “Isabel dos Santos: Africa’s Richest Woman ‘Ripped Off Angola,’” January 19, 2020; International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, “Luanda Leaks” documents and analyses, recently including “Isabel Dos Santos Charged with 12 Crimes in Angola over Her Dealings as Sonangol Chair,” January 19, 2024; and Reuters, “Angola’s Isabel dos Santos Loses Fight Against Freezing Order Over Assets,” December 20, 2023, *inter alia*.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Bloomberg, “Angola Says It Recovers \$3.35 Billion of Assets From Quantum,” March 23, 2019; and Associated Press, “Angolan Court Sentences ex-Leader’s Son to 5 years in Prison,” August 14, 2020; and AFP, “Angola’s Top Court Quashes Conviction Of Ex-president’s Son,” April 4, 2024, among others.

<sup>16</sup> Paula Cristina Roque, *Governing in the Shadows: Angola’s Securitized State* (Hurst), 2021.

<sup>17</sup> HRW and other critics of the national security law assert it will further centralize the state’s national security apparatus and expand its authority to engage in warrantless searches and physical and digital surveillance, and potentially interfere with transport, commerce, and private activities in some cases. The law also sets out in vague language the “patriotic and civic” duty of civilians to collaborate with national security agencies. HRW, “Angola: President Signs Laws Curtailing Speech, Association,” September 10, 2024, *inter alia*.

president. UNITA garnered a 44% vote share and 90 seats (a 39-seat gain).<sup>18</sup> While the U.S. State Department, citing local and foreign election observers, reported that polling was peaceful and orderly, some observers and opposition parties cited procedural, fairness, and credibility problems, and at 45%, voter turnout was low relative to prior post-war elections.<sup>19</sup> The constitutional court dismissed on technical grounds a UNITA lawsuit seeking to annul the election.<sup>20</sup> Separate long-planned local elections have never been held.

## Rights and Liberties

Human rights conditions in Angola often are poor, according to the State Department, and while the government has taken some significant actions to address human rights violations by state security forces, impunity and abuses remain common. Key human rights problems in 2023, the State Department reports, included

arbitrary or unlawful killings; cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment by the government; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest or detention; serious problems with the independence of the judiciary; political prisoners or detainees; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, including threats of violence ..., unjustified arrests or prosecutions ... [and] enforcement of or threat to enforce criminal libel laws to limit expression; substantial interference with the freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, including overly restrictive laws on ... nongovernmental and civil society organizations; serious government corruption; extensive gender-based violence ...; [and] systematic restrictions on workers' freedom of association.<sup>21</sup>

Freedom House (FH), a U.S.-based nongovernmental organization, categorizes Angola as “not free” regarding the exercise of political rights and civil liberties. FH, like the State Department and multiple other sources, has reported that those protesting over public policy issues or politics often face violent police responses or arrest. Issues such as police brutality, economic hardship, and corruption have spurred protests, as did COVID-19 pandemic-period lockdowns.<sup>22</sup> Long-standing demands for regional autonomy and secessionist sentiment in the small exclave province of Cabinda, a key source of Angola’s oil production, also have sparked periodic small protests, police repression, and sporadic armed clashes between armed secessionist insurgents and the military. In July 2024, a local Cabindan insurgent group accused the Angolan military of killing six civilians and said it had killed 11 soldiers in response.<sup>23</sup>

## Economy

Angola’s oil export-reliant economy has created wealth for political elites, but the majority of Angolans remain poor. The economy grew rapidly after the civil war ended in 2002, fueled by high global oil prices and large influxes of credit from Angola’s biggest oil export market, the PRC, and international private bank consortia loans. Annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth peaked at 15% in 2005. Falling world oil prices halted this growth pattern in the mid-

<sup>18</sup> Angola National Electoral Commission (CNE) vote results data; and Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Parline* database.

<sup>19</sup> CNE data; Paula Cristina Roque, “Angola: Anatomy of a Stolen Election,” September 15, 2022, and Cláudio Silva, “The Real Winners of Angola’s Election,” September 14, 2022,” both in *African Arguments*.

<sup>20</sup> Reuters, “Angolan Court Rejects Opposition Claim to Annul Election Result,” September 6, 2022.

<sup>21</sup> DOS, *2023 Country Reports*, and prior-year editions of this annual report series.

<sup>22</sup> FH, “Angola,” in *Freedom in the World 2024*, February 29, 2024, and prior editions of this annual report.

<sup>23</sup> DW, “FLEC-FAC acusa ejército angolano de matar seis civis,” July 13, 2024; see also Inge Amundsen, “Cabinda Separatism and Human Rights Violations,” in CIEMEN, *A Report on Secessionist Movements in Africa and Human Rights Violations*, January 2022.



2010s. GDP growth plunged from 4.8% in 2014 to 0.9% in 2015 and thereafter contracted each year, including by 5.6% in 2020 (a drop largely attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic) before a 1.2% recovery in 2021. GDP grew by 3.0% in 2022 and by an estimated 0.5% in 2023.<sup>24</sup>

In 2018 (latest data), nearly 53% of Angolans—especially in rural areas, where subsistence farming is common—lived on less than \$3.65 per day, the international poverty line for lower-middle-income countries such as Angola.<sup>25</sup> Many of these Angolans may not benefit directly from reforms to the formal, state-centric economy in the short term, though such reforms may eventually aid the broader informal, small-scale economy in which most Angolans make a living. Despite a post-civil war expansion in state-provided social services, the socioeconomic needs of Angolans are extensive; Angola ranked 150 out of 192 countries in the 2023/2024 UN Human Development Index. In the long-term, more inclusive, non-oil-based growth and a decrease in Angola’s high rate of economic inequality may be achievable if Angola can better exploit its considerable potential in agriculture, fisheries, and mining.

### Challenges to an Oil-Centered Economy and Multilateral Assistance

Angola’s oil export earnings peaked at roughly \$69.7 billion in 2012 but have since declined, to an estimated average of \$36.5 billion between 2021 and 2023, due a mix of price pressures and falling output. While the export share of crude oil and related products remained high, at 94% in that latter period (with diamonds a distant second, at about 4%), the fossil fuels’ share of GDP has declined, from about 59% in 2010 and 2011 to an average of 34% (2021-2023 average).<sup>26</sup> In the mid- to late-2010s, the decline in oil earnings contributed to a sharp drop in hard currency inflows and financial liquidity, decreases in state investment and private spending, and a resulting decline in the industrial, construction, and services sectors. The value of Angola’s Kwanza currency also plunged by a factor of seven (720%), relative to the U.S. dollar, between 2015 and 2024. To halt this trend, in 2023 Angola’s central bank imposed currency exchange restrictions, partially reversing prior exchange policy liberalization.

Multilateral institutions and the PRC government have provided loans and assistance to the government to address Angola’s economic challenges. In 2018, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) granted the government a three-year, \$3.7 billion concessional Extended Fund Facility loan conditioned on economic governance and fiscal reforms and efforts to foster private sector-centered diversification and growth, and in 2020 expanded this credit by \$766 million to help Angola address COVID-19 pandemic shocks.<sup>27</sup> This support was supplemented by debt service relief under the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI). Angola also received debt service relief from PRC state banks (see below).<sup>28</sup> In April 2024, the IMF projected that GDP growth would grow from 0.5% in 2023 to 2.6% in 2024. The IMF attributed the low the growth in 2023 to weak oil prices, lower oil production, and a state budget that had ballooned in 2022, an election year, and the later uptick to positive trends in such factors and non-oil sector production.<sup>29</sup> To increase oil revenue, after cuts to Angola’s Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) oil quota, in late 2023, Angola quit OPEC, effective as of 2024.<sup>30</sup>

## Selected Angolan Foreign Policy Issues

In addition to pursuing warmer relations with the United States, Angola maintains close ties with the PRC and Russia. Since the mid-2010s, Angola also has played a role in regional conflict

<sup>24</sup> International Monetary Fund (IMF), *World Economic Outlook* database, April 2024 (hereinafter *WEO*).

<sup>25</sup> In 2018, 32% of Angolans also lived below Angola’s national poverty line. The \$3.65 figure is expressed in 2017 purchasing power parity dollars, a global comparative unit. World Bank, “Angola,” *Poverty & Equity Brief*, April 2024.

<sup>26</sup> Foregoing data in this paragraph from IMF, *WEO*; multiple IMF Angola Country Reports; and CRS calculations.

<sup>27</sup> IMF, “IMF Executive Board Approves US\$3.7 Billion Extended Arrangement Under the Extended Fund Facility for Angola,” December 7, 2018, and IMF Country Report No. 19/170, 2019; and EIU, “IMF Agreement Secured,” December 14, 2018.

<sup>28</sup> Reuters, “Angola gets breathing space from Chinese creditors, says finance minister,” January 11, 2021, *inter alia*.

<sup>29</sup> See IMF Country Reports No. 23/334, September 2023, and No. 24/224, July 2024.

<sup>30</sup> Bloomberg, “Angola Quits OPEC Amid Disagreement Over Oil Production Quotas,” December 21, 2023.

mediation efforts aimed at ending a series of interrelated conflicts and related dynamics that have affected eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) since the mid-1990s, when Angola had played a role in such conflicts.

**China.** China is Angola's largest trade partner, and Angola is China's second-largest African trade partner after South Africa. Angolan-PRC trade in goods totaled \$23.1 billion in 2023, and fossil fuels composed about 99% of Angola's \$18.9 billion in goods exports to China.<sup>31</sup> China has been a major lender to Angola since 2000, as well as a source of grant-based aid in such areas as health, emergency response, education, and agriculture.<sup>32</sup> Between 2000 and 2023, PRC-based entities made loan commitments to Angola valued at a total of \$46 billion, distributed across 270 reported transactions, making it the top estimated recipient of PRC loans in Africa. The China Development Bank (CDB) and other PRC state-owned development banks have provided most of this credit, which primarily has funded public infrastructure (e.g., transport, water, and power), agriculture, health, housing, and telecommunications.<sup>33</sup> A 2016 \$10 billion CDB loan also sought to help finance a restructuring of Sonangol, Angola's state oil firm.

Some loans and credit lines have been payable in or collateralized with oil, or have been components of deals under which PRC energy SOEs have received rights to develop oil blocks. Total outstanding debt owed by Angola to PRC entities is not consistently made public, and reported estimates of such debt data vary. The World Bank estimates that in 2022 (latest data), Angola's global external outstanding debt totaled \$60 billion, nearly \$21 billion of which was owed to PRC state creditors.<sup>34</sup> In 2021, after Angola's receipt in 2020 of G20 DSSI debt service payment suspensions, Angola negotiated a separate three-year moratorium on debt repayments owed on \$4.9 billion of PRC debt. That deal ended in May 2023.<sup>35</sup> Angola may owe additional debt to PRC entities linked to as much as \$10 billion in allegedly corrupt infrastructure loans provided to Angola in the 2000s by an opaque Hong Kong-based firm called China International Fund (CIF), including via China Sonangol, a joint CIF-Sonangol venture.<sup>36</sup>

PRC-Angola ties are likely to remain robust, though Angola also appears interested in reducing the extent of its reliance on PRC finance. In late 2023, the two countries signed a reciprocal investment protection agreement. China also granted Angola duty-free import benefits, and sectoral agreements on agriculture and fisheries production reportedly are planned.<sup>37</sup> In March 2024, President Lourenço and PRC President Xi Jinping met in Beijing and agreed to form a "comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership," implying increased economic, political, security, and other cooperation. The two sides also signed agreements on economic and trade issues, green development, and agriculture, and the CDB agreed to reduce some Angolan official

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<sup>31</sup> Over the past decade, Angola's share of China's total oil imports has decreased, from 12% in 2010, when Angola was China's second-largest oil imports supplier, to under 3.6% in 2023, when it was China's 15<sup>th</sup>-largest supplier. Trade Data Monitor data; and CRS calculations.

<sup>32</sup> AidData, "Global Chinese Official Finance Dataset\_V1.0 (2000-2014)," among others.

<sup>33</sup> Boston University Global Development Policy Center, *Chinese Loans to Africa* database (2024 release).

<sup>34</sup> World Bank, 2023 *International Debt Statistics* database as of September 29, 2024.

<sup>35</sup> Reuters, "Angola gets breathing space from Chinese creditors, says finance minister," January 11, 2021; and *South China Morning Post* [SCMP], "Angola's Interest Payments to Creditors Double as Chinese Debt Freeze Ends," September 16, 2023.

<sup>36</sup> Reported CIF loans amounts vary. Tom Burgis, "Detention of Networker Extraordinaire Sam Pa Creates Shockwaves," *Financial Times*, October 18, 2015; U.S.-China Economic & Security Review Commission, *The 88 Queensway Group: A Case Study in Chinese Investors' Operations in Angola and Beyond*, 2009; and J.R. Mailey, *The Anatomy of the Resource Curse: Predatory Investment in Africa's Extractive Industries*, ACSS, 2015.

<sup>37</sup> *Global Times*, "China, Angola Sign Reciprocal Investment Protection Agreement, As Economic Partnership Will Be Accelerated: Foreign Minister Tête António," December 10, 2023; see also Reuters, "Angola's OPEC Exit Opens Way For More Chinese Investment," December 22, 2023.

debt repayments.<sup>38</sup> While no new military accords were reported, Lourenço has in the past endorsed military cooperation with China, as during a 2018 visit to China, and Angola has purchased PRC arms (e.g., armored vehicles and aircraft) over the past decade, and may buy more according to some reports.<sup>39</sup> Despite reportedly accepting an invitation to attend the September 2024 summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, which includes China and all but one African state (Eswatini), President Lourenço did not do so. Instead, he sent his foreign minister, angering the PRC government, according to one Portuguese media account, and leading some analysts to posit a possible cooling in PRC-Angola ties.<sup>40</sup>

**Russia.** Russia-Angola relations—rooted in the Cold War era—also endure.<sup>41</sup> During an official visit to Moscow in 2019, President Lourenço and Russian President Vladimir Putin signed several mutual cooperation agreements.<sup>42</sup> While Angola was represented at the 2023 Russia-Africa Summit, Lourenço did not personally attend, as he had a similar summit in 2019. In recent years, the Russian and Angolan foreign ministers have met several times to discuss ongoing cooperation, including on military matters.<sup>43</sup> Angola abstained regarding several 2022 UN General Assembly (UNGA) votes condemning various aspects of Russia’s military aggression in Ukraine, but in October 2022 it voted in favor of one supporting the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Ukraine and has urged Russia to initiate a peace process and end its aggression.<sup>44</sup> Angola has been a leading purchaser of Russian military arms and equipment in sub-Saharan Africa since the mid-2000s and reportedly made several large arms purchases from Russia in the 2010s, but has expressed an interest in buying U.S. military hardware.<sup>45</sup> In 2022, Roscosmos, Russia’s state-owned space firm, launched a communications and broadcast media satellite on behalf of Angola, after Roscosmos’s faulty launch of such a satellite in 2017.<sup>46</sup> The U.S.-sanctioned Russian state-owned diamond firm Alrosa operates in Angola.<sup>47</sup>

### Angola’s Regional Conflict Mediation Role

During its civil war, Angola’s MPLA government backed South African opponents of Apartheid and intervened militarily in several neighboring conflicts, including in the late 1990s in DRC on behalf of the late rebel and later

<sup>38</sup> *SCMP*, “How China and Angola are redefining economic ties for a post-oil, post-loans era,” March 18, 2024; and Reuters, “Angola agrees lower monthly debt payments to China Development Bank,” March 19, 2024.

<sup>39</sup> In the mid-2010s, Angola reportedly received at least \$16 million worth of PRC tanks and other assault vehicles. Not all such arms transfers are publicly reported. *Macau Daily Times*, “Angola’s President Starts State Visit to China,” October 10, 2018; *Xinhua*, “China, Angola Pledge to Enhance Cooperation,” June 25, 2019; Stockholm Int. Peace Research Inst. (SIPRI) data; *SCMP*, “How China and Angola”; and Defenceweb, “Angola receives final K-8W jets from China defence,” February 5, 2021.

<sup>40</sup> *Jornal de Negócios Premium*, “Governo chinês ‘furioso’ com ausência de Lourenço,” September 3, 2024.

<sup>41</sup> *Africa Report*, “Angola Says It’s Ready to Ditch Russia for US as Lourenço Eyes Third Term,” May 31, 2023.

<sup>42</sup> The signed accords centered on exploration and use of space, fisheries and aquaculture, and the diamond sector. Kester Kenn Klomegah, “Russia and Angola: Stuck Between Diplomatic Rhetoric and Business Reality,” *Eurasia Review*, April 7, 2019; and ANGOP, “President Lourenço distinguishes Vladimir Putin,” April 5, 2019.

<sup>43</sup> InterFAX, “Russia, Angola to develop not only military-technical cooperation, but also work together in civilian sectors-Lavrov,” October 13, 2021; and *SeeNews*, “Lavrov’s Statement at a Joint News Conference,” October 18, 2021.

<sup>44</sup> UNGA, A/RES/ES-11/4, October 13, 2022, and UN Digital Library *Voting Data*; and Agência Lusa (LUSA), “Ucrânia: Rússia deve tomar iniciativa de pôr fim ao conflito - PR angolano,” September 15, 2022.

<sup>45</sup> SIPRI data; Rostec, “Russia Will Supply Angola With \$1 Billion in Weapons,” press release, October 16, 2013; and Defenceweb, “Angola looking to acquire military hardware from the United States,” June 6, 2024.

<sup>46</sup> LUSA, “Rússia lançou segundo satélite angolano Angosat-2,” October 12, 2022, among others.

<sup>47</sup> Department of the Treasury, “The United States Sanctions Major Russian State-Owned Enterprises,” April 7, 2022; Club of Mozambique, “Angola: State adopts measures to minimise effect of sanctions on Russian diamond miner Alrosa,” April 12, 2022; and IDEX, “Catoca Mine: Angola and Russia Work to ‘Remove Obstacles’,” September 4, 2024.

DRC president Laurent-Désiré Kabila. It also deployed a bilateral military training mission in the DRC in the 2010s and deployed a military assistance mission to Guinea-Bissau in the early 2010s.<sup>48</sup> Over the past decade, Angola has increasingly positioned itself as a mediator of regional conflicts, including in the Central African Republic and in conflicts in or tied to DRC in the mid-2010s.<sup>49</sup>

Since 2022, Angola has been designated by the African Union and International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) to mediate talks between DRC and Rwanda, an effort dubbed the Luanda Process.<sup>50</sup> Tensions between those two neighboring states have escalated since the 2021 resurgence of a Rwandan-backed rebel movement in DRC, the M23, sparking fears of a regional conflagration, amid violence by multiple other armed groups, including an Islamic State affiliate. Other governments, including the United States, France, and Kenya, also have sought to deescalate the M23 conflict and DRC-Rwanda tensions. The Biden Administration has repeatedly endorsed the Luanda process and helped broker two temporary humanitarian truces in eastern DRC, in late 2023 and mid-2024.<sup>51</sup> On July 30, 2024, Angola announced an indefinite ceasefire in the M23 conflict. While reportedly broken by the M23 and pro-DRC government militias, that accord may have provided space for high-level DRC-Rwanda talks. A preliminary military de-escalation roadmap was reportedly reached in late August.<sup>52</sup> Past history suggests that achieving durable peace and stability outcomes in eastern DRC is likely to be politically and technically challenging, as suggested by challenges that have plagued current ongoing peace efforts.<sup>53</sup>

## U.S. Relations

Under the late former President dos Santos, bilateral ties were inhibited by residual MPLA distrust of the United States due to Cold War-era U.S. support for UNITA, as well as U.S. criticism regarding Angola's poor record on human rights and corruption. After the end of the Cold War, Angola's oil sector became a focus of U.S. engagement and private sector investment, and Angola became an important source of U.S. oil imports. Growth in U.S. energy production over the past decade has diminished Angola's significance to U.S. energy security interests. In the early 2010s, following the release of a 2010 Senate report on alleged corrupt practices by Angolan elites and their use of the U.S. banking system, at least two major U.S. banks closed the accounts of Angola's embassy in the United States.<sup>54</sup> Despite consequent but temporary diplomatic tensions, a U.S.-Angola Strategic Partnership Dialogue initiated in 2009 was formalized in 2010 under the Obama Administration.

The Trump Administration built on this dialogue, signing a bilateral defense memorandum of understanding (MOU) during a 2017 visit to the United States by then-Defense Minister

<sup>48</sup> Paula Cristina Roque, *Angola's Africa Policy* (Egmont Institute), 2017; and Reuters, "Angolan troops begin withdrawal from Guinea-Bissau," June 6, 2012.

<sup>49</sup> DOS, "Special Envoy Feingold's Travel to Africa," January 13, 2014; and *New Times*, "Rwanda, Uganda Relations - Spread of Fake News Violates Luanda Agreement," September 30, 2019.

<sup>50</sup> Angolan government via ICGLR, "Mini-Summit on Peace and Security in the Eastern Region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo," November 2022; and Amani Africa, "Briefing on mediation and reconciliation in conflict resolution in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo," July 14, 2024.

<sup>51</sup> White House, "Statement from NSC Spokesperson Adrienne Watson Welcoming the Humanitarian Truce in Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo," July 4, 2024, and "Statement from NSC Spokesperson Adrienne Watson Welcoming the Two-Week Ceasefire Extension in Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo," December 15, 2023; and DOS, "Secretary Blinken's Call with Angolan President Lourenço," August 7, 2024.

<sup>52</sup> *Africa Intelligence*, "War in the east: Luanda makes headway in Kigali-Kinshasa talks," September 10, 2024; and *The East African*, "Angola secures new ceasefire deal in Congo," July 31 2024.

<sup>53</sup> HRW, "DR Congo: Rwandan Forces, M23 Rebels Shell Civilians," September 26, 2024; and Michelle Gavin, "DRC-Rwanda Talks Underway, But Lasting Peace Remains Elusive," *Africa in Transition*, Council on Foreign Relations, August 20, 2024.

<sup>54</sup> U.S. Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, *Keeping Foreign Corruption Out of the United States: Four Case Histories*, 2010 (two-volume report), and eponymous hearing, February 4, 2010; and *Upstream*, "US banks shut out foreign embassies," November 26, 2010.

Lourenço.<sup>55</sup> In 2019, then-National Security Council Senior Director for African Affairs Cyril Sartor visited Luanda for talks prior to a fourth session of the strategic dialogue,<sup>56</sup> which included an official bilateral session on human rights and a roundtable with civil society groups.<sup>57</sup> Several reciprocal military exchange visits followed, with a focus on building deeper bilateral security ties, reportedly in part to counter Angolan military cooperation with China and Russia.<sup>58</sup> Civilian security cooperation, including under a 2019 accord, also expanded.<sup>59</sup>

The two countries also initiated efforts to strengthen economic ties. In 2019, the U.S. Export-Import Bank (EXIM) and Angola's Finance Ministry agreed to foster efforts to expand Angolan purchases of U.S. goods and services in multiple sectors (e.g., energy, infrastructure, transport, supply chain capacity, agriculture, health care, water and sanitation, and telecommunications), prospectively to be aided by up to \$4 billion in EXIM guarantees or loans.<sup>60</sup> In 2020, U.S. and Angolan officials signed a bilateral investment accord.<sup>61</sup> The same year, then-Secretary of State Michael Pompeo visited Angola, where he lauded President Lourenço's anti-corruption campaign and economic reforms, bilateral trade and investment prospects, ongoing development cooperation, and Angola's role in addressing crises in central Africa.<sup>62</sup>

The Biden Administration has sought to further expand bilateral ties. President Lourenço attended the Administration's 2022 African Leaders Summit, and President Biden hosted Lourenço for a meeting at the White House in November 2023. The two leaders discussed U.S. investments in the Lobito Corridor and Angola's solar sector, along with U.S. support for Angolan food security, energy sector and space cooperation, and democracy strengthening.<sup>63</sup> Secretary of State Blinken visited Angola in January 2024 to discuss these and other bilateral issues, as well as Angola's mediation of talks to deescalate military tensions between Rwanda and DRC. Blinken has since spoken by phone at least twice with President Lourenço, with whom he met on the UNGA sidelines in September 2024, and other top U.S. officials have traveled to Angola.<sup>64</sup> In 2023, the

<sup>55</sup> This MOU seeks to build a long-term mutual security partnership and support regional peace and security in Africa. It centers on military and civilian training exchanges and visits; maritime security and peacekeeping capacity-building; military health programs; the law of armed conflict, civil-military relations, and the rule of law; and defense policy, doctrine, and command and control capabilities, among other issues.

<sup>56</sup> U.S. Embassy-Luanda ("U.S. Embassy"), "Assistente Especial do Presidente Donald Trump Visita Mediateca 28 de Agosto para Reafirmar Parceria Existente," February 13, 2019, and "Joint Statement Following the U.S.-Angola Strategic Dialogue," March 19, 2019.

<sup>57</sup> U.S. Embassy, "The Republic of Angola and the United States of America Agree to Promote Human Rights in the Second Bilateral Dialogue," March 27, 2019.

<sup>58</sup> U.S. Embassy, "Delegação de Oficiais Superiores do Ministério da Defesa dos Estados Unidos da América em Angola," August 7, 2019; and *West Africa Newsletter*, "Trump seeks to nudge Lourenco out of Beijing's orbit," June 26, 2019.

<sup>59</sup> The agreement reportedly sought to bolster recent or ongoing activities (e.g., U.S. sponsored law enforcement training and U.S. small arms and light weapons reduction grant funding). U.S. Embassy, "Memorandum of Understanding Signing Ceremony between the US Government and the Government of Angola," July 1, 2019.

<sup>60</sup> EXIM, "EXIM Signs Memorandum of Understanding with Angola's Ministry of Finance," April 11, 2019; and U.S. Embassy, "Memorandum of Understanding Signing Ceremony between the US Government and the Government of Angola," July 1, 2019.

<sup>61</sup> U.S. Embassy, "SelectUSA and AIPEX Sign Cooperative Arrangement to Promote Bilateral Investment," September 23, 2020.

<sup>62</sup> DOS, "The United States and Angola: Deepening an Important Strategic Partnership," February 16, 2020.

<sup>63</sup> White House, "Readout of Meeting Between President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. and President João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço of Angola," November 30, 2023.

<sup>64</sup> DOS, "Secretary Antony J. Blinken and Angolan Foreign Minister Tête António at a Joint Press Availability," January 25, 2024, and "Secretary Blinken's Meeting with Angolan President Lourenco," September 24, 2024, among other releases.



United States and Angola signed an Open Skies agreement, aimed at fostering bilateral commercial air transport, and Angola signed the Artemis Accords, which set out principles for international space exploration cooperation.<sup>65</sup> Angola also has joined the Partnership for Atlantic Cooperation, launched in late 2023 by the United States and three dozen other countries,<sup>66</sup> and in June 2024, the two countries held a U.S.-Angola Energy Security Dialogue.<sup>67</sup>

## Lobito Corridor and Other U.S. Geostrategic Investments in Angola

The Biden Administration, jointly with some G7 partners and African regional multilateral financial institutions, is providing substantial credit assistance to Angola for the Lobito Corridor as a U.S. contribution to the G7 Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGI). PGI seeks to offer sustainable “transparent” and “high-standard” infrastructure investments globally, in contrast to what U.S. officials have portrayed as opaque, corruption-stoking PRC-backed projects globally.<sup>68</sup> Other U.S. PGI investments in Angola center on solar infrastructure.

PGI investments focused on the Lobito Corridor aim to upgrade the extant Lobito Atlantic Railway (LAR, formerly the Benguela railway) and a linked mines-focused rail network in southern DRC; build a new rail branch line through mineral-rich northern Zambia tied to the LAR’s terminus; and provide varied development investments to spur growth along the corridor. LAR investments also seek to expand African supply chains of critical and other minerals not controlled by PRC-based entities—though as an open-access line, some shipments using the Lobito line may end up in China—and to decrease intra-regional bulk shipping times and costs.

In June 2024, the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) approved a \$553 million loan to Lobito Atlantic Railway (the rail line operator) to support rail upgrades, operations, and maintenance of a railway line and the port of Lobito. Under a 30-year contract signed in 2022, Lobito Atlantic International—a private sector rail operations consortium led by commodity trader Trafigura that includes a firm with PRC-state ownership ties—is carrying out that work.<sup>69</sup> In September 2024, South Africa’s Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) also pledged to provide up to \$200 million for LAR upgrades in Angola, in part to support purchases of South African-made rolling stock, while the public-private Africa Finance Corporation signed an agreement with Zambia and Angola to lead development of the planned LAR extension into Zambia. The U.S. Trade and Development Agency also provided the Africa Finance Corporation (AFC) with a \$2 million grant to fund an environmental and social impact

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<sup>65</sup> DOS, “Signed Memorandum of Consultations and Initialed Air Transport Agreement Between the U.S. and Angola of April 26, 2023,” April 26, 2023, and “United States Welcomes the Republic of Angola’s Signature of the Artemis Accords,” December 4, 2023.

<sup>66</sup> The initiative focuses on issues ranging from security concerns to climate change impacts to sustainable development and science and technology cooperation. See [state.gov/atlantic-cooperation](https://state.gov/atlantic-cooperation).

<sup>67</sup> DOS, “Digital Press Briefing: U.S.-Angola Energy Security Dialogue and U.S.-Africa Energy Partnerships Special Briefing,” June 18, 2024.

<sup>68</sup> DOS, “The Administration’s Approach to the People’s Republic of China,” May 26, 2022, *inter alia*; Alex Leary and Tarini Parti, “U.S. and G-7 Allies Detail Infrastructure Plan to Challenge China,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 27, 2022; and Geopoliticalmonitor.com, “The Lobito Corridor: Washington’s Answer to Belt and Road in Africa,” September 26, 2023.

<sup>69</sup> Contracted upgrades to the LAR, refurbished by a PRC-based firm in the 2010s, are to include purchases of 35 locomotives and 1,555 cargo wagons and \$100 million worth of work on the DRC rail. In 2024, the consortium shipped its first contracted DRC ore consignment, to China. U.S.-sanctioned firm China Communications Construction Co., Ltd. owns a 32.4% share of Mota-Engil. DFC, Board decision BDR(24)31, June 5, 2024 and DRC LAR project information sheet; Trafigura, “Lobito Atlantic Railway,” October 1, 2023; and *Global Mining Review*, “Ivanhoe Mines Ships First Copper Concentrate By Rail to Angola,” January 4, 2024; and Mota-Engil, “Corporate Profile,” *inter alia*.



assessment for the project.<sup>70</sup> EXIM also is supporting a U.S. firm with a \$363 million loan guarantee to build prefabricated bridges in Angola, including for the LAR.<sup>71</sup> The Zambia LAR extension project is set out under an agreement between Angola, DRC, Zambia, the United States, the European Union, and two African multilateral banks; one, the U.S.-supported African Development Bank (AfDB), has pledged a \$500 million loan to Zambia for that purpose.<sup>72</sup> In June 2024, Italy also committed “at least \$320 million of grant, equity and debt capital” to finance the planned Zambia spur.<sup>73</sup> To support joint investments and related trade and transport cooperation tied to the Lobito Corridor, in 2023 Angola, DRC, and Zambia established a shared entity, the Lobito Corridor Transit Transport Facilitation Agency.<sup>74</sup>

U.S. officials portray Lobito Corridor investments as a catalyst for transformative local economic growth, sub-regional integration, non-PRC-controlled strategic mineral export supply chains, and a foundation for additional U.S. and third-party investments. These include a \$1 million U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) grant to help Angola’s Transport Ministry develop a public-private transport investment unit, and a \$5 million USAID Gender Equity and Equality Action Fund project to help build the value chains of female small farmers along the corridor, aided by U.S. firm Africell’s mobile money and cell phone networks (see below).<sup>75</sup> In August 2024, U.S. PGI Acting Special Coordinator Helaina Matza discussed ongoing U.S. assessments of possible efforts to integrate Tanzania with PGI Lobito Corridor investments and potentially “realize the vision of a Trans-Africa Corridor” from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean. She said that there was a potential to link the LAR with the Tanzania-Zambia Railroad (TAZARA), a PRC-built line slated to be upgraded by PRC firms under a \$1 billion project. Matza also discussed an array of potential related development investments.<sup>76</sup>

Also under the auspices of PGI, EXIM is providing credit support for two sizable solar and related development projects and several smaller transactions. These two projects have been facilitated by EXIM’s China and Transformational Exports Program (CTEP), a congressionally mandated program that supports U.S. exporters facing PRC competition in markets abroad. Under the first project, U.S. firm Sun Africa is to build two utility-scale solar photovoltaic power plants using U.S. solar technology financed by a \$907 million direct loan to the Angolan state. In addition to advancing CTEP and PGI goals, the project aims to help reduce future Angolan greenhouse gas emissions and support 1,600 U.S. production jobs.<sup>77</sup> Under a second project, supported by a \$1.6 billion EXIM-guaranteed Private Export Funding Corporation loan to the

<sup>70</sup> DBSA, “DBSA Approves \$200 Million for the Lobito Corridor Railway Project,” September 3, 2024; and AFC, “AFC Signs Concession Agreements with Governments of Angola and Zambia to advance Zambia Lobito Rail Project,” September 25, 2024.

<sup>71</sup> EXIM, “EXIM Honors 10 Small Businesses For Exporting Success at 2023 Annual Conference,” October 24, 2023.

<sup>72</sup> White House, “Fact Sheet: Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment at the G7 Summit,” June 13, 2024.

<sup>73</sup> AfDB, “G-7 leaders reaffirm support for billion-dollar infrastructure programme for Africa; pledges more support to African Development Bank-backed initiatives,” June 14, 2024.

<sup>74</sup> Bloomberg, “Angola, Zambia, Congo Set Up Joint Agency to Manage Key Trade Corridor,” January 31, 2023; and DOS, “Signing of the MOU on the Development of the Lobito Corridor and the Zambia-Lobito Rail Line,” October 26, 2023.

<sup>75</sup> White House, “The U.S.-Angola Partnership,” November 30, 2023; and DOS, “Digital Press Briefing on Lobito Corridor MoU Signing,” October 31, 2023.

<sup>76</sup> DOS, “Digital Press Briefing: Lobito Corridor Expansion and U.S. Infrastructure on the African Continent,” August 28, 2024; and Reuters, “China to ‘revitalise’ ageing railway linking Zambia, Tanzania,” September 4, 2024.

<sup>77</sup> EXIM, “Export-Import Bank of the United States Approves More Than \$900M for Solar Energy Project in Angola,” June 1, 2023, and “Miami Firm SunAfrica Awarded Deal of the Year at Export-Import Bank of the United States 2023 Annual Conference,” October 20, 2023; and White House, “President Biden and G7 Leaders Formally Launch the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment,” June 26, 2022, and “The U.S.-Angola Partnership.”

Angolan government, Sun Africa is to construct “65 solar photovoltaic energy mini-grids with energy storage facilities that will power water collection, treatment, and purification systems in four southern provinces in Angola.”<sup>78</sup> The transaction, which also involves Omatapalo, an Angolan firm, and U.S.-based ING Capital, aims to support local development ends in Angola and 3,100 U.S. jobs. A separate \$40 million EXIM-guaranteed transaction supported by Deutsche Bank is financing upgrades to enable national FM broadcast signal expansion.<sup>79</sup>

Other U.S.-backed projects seek to provide alternatives to PRC firms’ telecommunications service offerings in Angola. During a 2022 trip to Angola, then-Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman highlighted an investment by U.S. firm Africell, the first foreign mobile phone operator in Angola.<sup>80</sup> Africell has built a data center in Angola and, with USAID, launched a \$5 million, five-year project to foster financial inclusion by expanding the firm’s mobile money platform. Africell is a competitor in Angola to the U.S.-sanctioned PRC telecommunications firm Huawei, which also has data centers in Angola and could pose local citizen surveillance threats, Sherman said.<sup>81</sup> Senior DFC officials also are assessing other potential efforts to promote greater private investment in Angolan infrastructure (e.g., rail, digital networks, power transmission, and water systems).<sup>82</sup> Meanwhile, Angola’s state-owned airline TAAG has agreed to buy a \$3.6 billion, 10-airplane package from U.S. firm Boeing, and in early 2024, the U.S. Agriculture Department led an agricultural trade and food security-focused trade mission to Angola.<sup>83</sup>

In addition to the mineral export-related LAR, U.S. officials are focusing on Angola’s critical minerals resource base as another target of prospective U.S. strategic investment interest. While Angola today produces few critical minerals, it reportedly hosts significant critical mineral reserves and is looking to expand exploration for and potential mining of such commodities.<sup>84</sup> In November 2023, the U.S. Geological Survey and Angola’s Geological Institute signed an MOU on scientific cooperation, such as on mapping possible copper, lithium, cobalt, and manganese resources.<sup>85</sup> The same month, the Angolan government granted Canada-based Ivanhoe Mines exploration rights to large areas of Angola. This activity is slated to focus on copper but could include work on critical minerals.<sup>86</sup> In September 2024, the U.S.-led Minerals Security

<sup>78</sup> EXIM, “Export-Import Bank of the United States Board of Directors Approves Historic \$1.6 Billion Rural Solar Energy and Water Supply Transaction in Angola,” July 18, 2024; and CRS communication with EXIM, July 31, 2024.

<sup>79</sup> DOS, “Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGI) Celebrates Signing of Finance Agreements for Republic of Angola Projects,” May 7, 2024.

<sup>80</sup> DOS, “Digital Briefing with Deputy Secretary of State, Wendy Sherman,” May 6, 2022, *inter alia*.

<sup>81</sup> News24, “US-China Rivalry Plays Out in Angola’s Mobile Phone Sector, says US official,” May 9, 2022; U.S. Embassy, “Ambassador Fite’s Remarks at the Inauguration of Africell’s Data Center,” October 20, 2021, “Embassy Luanda Launches the Dinheiro Digital é Melhor Project to Increase Financial Inclusion,” August 7, 2023; and Africell, “Africell Partners with USAID to Grow Mobile Money in Angola,” August 7, 2023, among other Africell releases.

<sup>82</sup> DRC, “DFC CEO Nathan Meets With President of Angola João Lourenço to Discuss Opportunities to Drive Infrastructure Investments and Boost Economic Activity,” December 1, 2023.

<sup>83</sup> U.S. Agriculture Department, “Angola - February 2024 Trade Mission, February 26-29, 2024; and White House, “The U.S.-Angola Partnership.”

<sup>84</sup> Africa.com, “Global Mining Investors To Meet In Luanda For The 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition Of The Angolan Mining Conference & Exhibition 2023,” August 11, 2023; and *Geopolitical Monitor*, “Angola Bets on Critical Minerals and the Lobito Corridor,” October 2, 2023.

<sup>85</sup> U.S. Geological Survey agreement text provided to CRS; *Mining Review*, “Ivanhoe Secures 22,195 Km2 of Prospecting Rights in Angola,” November 30, 2023.

<sup>86</sup> Ivanhoe Mines, “Ivanhoe Mines to Commence Exploration Activities in Angola,” November 27, 2023.

Partnership announced a \$3.4 million DFC technical assistance grant supporting expansion of a rare earths project in Angola, sited along the Lobito Corridor, by Pensana, a UK-based firm.<sup>87</sup>

## Defense Ties

The Lourenço administration has hosted several high-level U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) visits, including by the then-commander of the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) in 2022 and by Secretary of Defense Austin in 2023. Austin’s visit focused on military capacity building, maritime security, space cooperation, cyber defense, regional security, and related issues. The Secretary and his Angolan counterpart agreed to establish a Joint Angolan-American Defense Cooperation Committee and hold an annual defense cooperation dialogue.<sup>88</sup> In mid-2024, during the entity’s first meeting, the two sides signed a bilateral defense acquisition and cross-servicing agreement, amid indications that Angola is seeking to purchase U.S. defense equipment.<sup>89</sup> In 2023, Angola and the United States co-hosted in Luanda a Military Intelligence Conference.<sup>90</sup> The United States also plans to “explore new opportunities to expand capacity building efforts for cyber security and Angola’s Navy” and “has significantly increased military assistance to Angola in the past four years, providing over \$18 million from 2020-2023.” These expanded ties supplement years-long U.S. International Military Education and Training (IMET) aid for Angola, and periodic Angolan participation in U.S.-led regional military exercises and other security cooperation. The United States provided over \$18 million in military aid from 2020 to 2023.<sup>91</sup>

## U.S. Anti-Corruption Efforts, Bilateral Aid, and Other Engagement

The Biden Administration has sought to support anti-corruption efforts in Angola, and in 2021 imposed a U.S. visa ban on Isabel dos Santos for “significant corruption by misappropriating public funds” and on two other former top dos Santos administration officials. The U.S. Department of the Treasury also financially sanctioned those two ex-officials for embezzling “billions” of Angolan state infrastructure funds, including in collusion with the head of the China International Fund, a U.S.-sanctioned individual.<sup>92</sup> USAID and the State Department are working with the National Bank of Angola to increase public finance transparency and oversight, improve Angola’s Transparency International *Corruption Perceptions Index* score, and help it to implement its Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) commitments.<sup>93</sup> Additionally,

<sup>87</sup> MSP, an investment alliance between the United States and several industrialized countries, aims to promote public-private investment in resilient, sustainable, and legally, socially, and environmentally well-governed critical mineral mining production and supply chains crucial to supporting a clean energy transition; see MSP website, [state.gov/minerals-security-partnership](https://state.gov/minerals-security-partnership). On the Pensana grant, see DOS, “Joint Statement on Establishment of the Minerals Security Partnership Finance Network,” September 23, 2024.

<sup>88</sup> AFRICOM, “Gen. Townsend Visits East Africa and Angola to Advance Mutual Security Interests,” May 23, 2022; DOD, “A Partnership of Principle and Progress: Remarks by Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III During a Trip to Africa (As Delivered),” and “Readout of Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III’s Meetings With President of Angola João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço & Minister of Defense João Ernersto dos Santos,” both September 27, 2023.

<sup>89</sup> DOD, “Joint Statement on the Inaugural Meeting of the Joint Angolan-American Defense Cooperation Committee,” June 6, 2024, and “Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III Remarks Welcoming Angolan Minister of National Defense Joao Ernesto dos Santos to the Pentagon,” May 28, 2024; and Defenceweb, “Angola looking to acquire military hardware from the United States,” June 6, 2024.

<sup>90</sup> AFRICOM, “U.S. and Angola Co-Host Intelligence Conference,” May 2, 2023.

<sup>91</sup> DOS, “The United States and Angola: Partnering for Prosperity,” January 24, 2024 (source for preceding quote).

<sup>92</sup> DOS, “Elevating Anti-Corruption Leadership and Promoting Accountability for Corrupt Actors,” December 9, 2021; and Department of the Treasury, “Treasury Issues Sanctions on International Anti-Corruption Day,” December 9, 2021.

<sup>93</sup> EITI is a voluntary international initiative to promote transparency in extractive industry payments to governments, among other transparency-building measures and capacity-building work. Angola joined EITI in 2022.

the Department of the Treasury supports Angolan anti-money laundering, terrorist financing, and debt reduction efforts.<sup>94</sup>

State Department and USAID-administered aid for Angola totaled nearly \$57 million in FY2023 (latest country fiscal year public breakout); the Administration requested \$55 million for FY2024 and \$56 million for FY2025.<sup>95</sup> Such aid is weighted heavily toward health programs to combat HIV/AIDS and malaria, respectively, under the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI).<sup>96</sup> The United States also provided \$34 million to Angola in emergency COVID-19 response funding (2020-2022) and over 11 million COVID-19 vaccine doses,<sup>97</sup> and USAID has provided humanitarian aid in response to droughts in recent years (\$9.4 in FY2022, \$3.8 million in FY2023, and \$3.9 million in FY2024).<sup>98</sup> Angola is one of six countries initially chosen for support under the Vision for Adaptive Crops and Soils (VACS), a project of the U.S. multi-agency Feed the Future global food security initiative and the International Fund for Agriculture Development. VACS aims to enhance agricultural productivity by scaling access to climate-resilient crop varieties and improve soil health, among other ends.

U.S. programs also support civil rights and democratic processes, some security and law enforcement or judiciary efforts, and economic development.<sup>99</sup> The United States has long supported the removal of landmines in Angola, a legacy of the civil war, to protect human welfare and stimulate economic growth in affected areas.<sup>100</sup> Other ongoing efforts include U.S. Embassy-led projects to strengthen judicial independence and court capacities, press freedom, and other ends. USAID is supporting \$10 million-worth of conservation and local development projects in the Cubango Okavango River Basin in support of the Defending Economic Livelihoods and Threatened Animals Act (DELTA Act, P.L. 115-353, an anti-poaching and wildlife trafficking capacity-building measure), while the State Department is supporting park ranger training.<sup>101</sup> Angola benefits from several other U.S. multi-agency, multi-country development initiatives, including Prosper Africa, a Trump Administration-initiated U.S.-Africa trade and investment effort; Power Africa, an electricity generation and distribution expansion effort; and the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI). The Obama Administration initiated the latter two initiatives.<sup>102</sup> Angola also is eligible for duty-free trade preferences under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA, Title I of P.L. 106-200, as amended). U.S.-Angola trade totaled \$1.8 billion in 2023: \$1.2 billion in Angolan exports and \$0.6 billion in U.S. imports, of which 15% utilized AGOA preferences.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>94</sup> White House, "The U.S.-Angola Partnership"; and DOS, "The United States and Angola: Partnering for Prosperity."

<sup>95</sup> These figures do not include Agriculture Department-administered Food for Progress aid or occasional, mostly ad hoc programs funded by other agencies or under global or functional programs. Country-level allocations of FY2024 appropriations are not available. DOS, *Congressional Budget Justification* (CBJ) for FY2024 and for FY2025.

<sup>96</sup> On these two initiatives in Angola, see documents at DOS on PEPFAR, <https://www.state.gov/where-we-work-pepfar>; and on PMI, <https://www.pmi.gov/where-we-work/angola>.

<sup>97</sup> USAID, "COVID-19–Sub-Saharan Africa," Fact Sheet #6, FY2022 September 30, 2022; and DOS, "The United States and Angola: Partnering for Prosperity," January 24, 2024.

<sup>98</sup> USAID/Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, "Angola Assistance Overview," July 2024.

<sup>99</sup> DOS, "The United States and Angola: Partnering for Prosperity," January 24, 2024.

<sup>100</sup> Such aid totaled \$158 million between FY1994 and FY2022. DOS, *To Walk the Earth in Safety*, 2023.

<sup>101</sup> White House, "The U.S.-Angola Partnership."

<sup>102</sup> On Prosper Africa, see CRS In Focus IF11384, *The Trump Administration's Prosper Africa Initiative*, and [prosperafrica.gov](https://prosperafrica.gov). YALI is an emergent youthful leadership capacity-building program; see [yali.state.gov](https://yali.state.gov).

<sup>103</sup> U.S. International Trade Commission *Dataweb* and CRS calculations.

## Author Information

Nicolas Cook  
Specialist in African Affairs

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