

## EU Observers Satisfied with Angola Elections

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**International observers are expressing general satisfaction with Angola's legislative elections Friday and Saturday as vote counting nears an end. With 78.5 percent of the votes counted the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, MPLA, is leading with about 80 percent, while the opposition Union for the Total Independence of Angola, UNITA, has received 10 percent. VOA's Scott Bobb reports from Luanda.**

The head of the European Union's observer mission, Luisa Morgantini, expressed satisfaction over Angola's elections, calling them a major step forward.

She says we are convinced that these elections were an advance for democracy, despite the organizational limitations and certain legal inconsistencies.

The European delegation in its preliminary report said some aspects of the elections fell short of international standards. It cited confusion and disorganization on voting day which caused some polling stations to open late, others to run out of ballot papers and a few not to open at all. The problems led election officials to extend voting in 320 centers by a second day.

Nevertheless, the European observers said voting was peaceful and tabulation of the results was transparent.

Observers from the Pan-African Parliamentary Union, the Southern African Community-SADC and several other regional organizations agreed in their preliminary reports issued earlier.

A network of Angolan observer groups (called Plataforma) that fielded 1,300 monitors across the country said it recorded six incidents of violence or intimidation and more than 400 other irregularities, mostly due to a lack of voting materials. But it said there was no evidence of coercion.

The Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, MPLA, which has governed since independence, received a resounding endorsement from Angolan voters.

The opposition Union for the Total Liberation of Angola, UNITA, lost ground, running a distant second. UNITA leader Isaias Samakuva said there were numerous flaws and he would consider filing a formal protest after the final results are in.

He says the election results might not accurately reflect the will of the Angolan people. But he urged his supporters to remain calm and said his party remained committed to peace, democracy and reconstruction.

These were the second multi-party elections in Angolan history and the first since a peace accord six years ago ended 27 years of civil war.

The MPLA ran on a platform of continuity and pledged to spend more revenues from Angola's booming oil industry on rebuilding roads, railways and education and health services.

UNITA and 12 other opposition parties campaigned on the need for change after three decades of MPLA rule.

More than 5,000 candidates competed for the 220 seats in the national assembly. Each party was given equal air-time on state-owned broadcasting media to present its platform.

But opposition parties and human rights organizations said the ruling party benefited from government patronage and disproportionately heavy coverage in state-owned news media.

More than eight million voters last year were registered in a massive drive that reached to the remotest corners of the country. The registration lists will also be used for presidential elections due next year and local elections due the following year.



Angolans queue outside electoral tents as voting is delayed due to technical problems, Samba neighborhood in Luanda, 05 Sep 2008