

### Angola opposition appeal rejected

Angola's electoral commission has rejected appeals from the country's main opposition party to challenge election results on grounds of "voting irregularities" at polling stations.

"The claims of Unita are not accompanied by any proof," Adao de Almeida, a spokesman for the national electoral commission, said in the Luanda province on Monday.

**The commission's announcement came as European Union observers said on Monday the elections held on September 5, in which Angola's ruling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) has taken an insurmountable lead, were "transparent".**

The National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (Unita) opposition party had demanded that votes be recounted and vowed to challenge the poll's validity in the Constitutional Court.

Isaias Samakuva, Unita's leader, said on South Africa's SAFM radio on Monday: "There are people that were instructed, who were forced to vote, [for] a particular party. I wonder how this was election was free."

#### **'No wrongdoing'**

Angolan authorities denied wrongdoing during the election period, but said there were administrative problems in some areas, particularly in Luanda province, home to about 21 per cent of the nation's 8.3 million voters.

An extra day of voting was held on Saturday in Luanda.

With almost three-quarters of votes counted from the two-day poll, the MPLA has won nearly 82 per cent of the vote versus Unita's 10 per cent.

The MPLA, which has been in power since independence from Portugal in 1975, was also ahead in all 18 provinces of the oil-rich nation and was within reach of the necessary two-thirds majority of the 220-seat parliament, which would give it the power to change the constitution.

#### **Organisational problems**

**European Union monitors, while admitting that the vote, the first in 16 years, had been marred by organisational problems, said they had not endangered the electoral process and that no cases of violence were observed during the campaign or voting.**

**"The election marks a critical step for democracy despite the organisation difficulties. The Angolan people participated actively and voted freely," the EU mission said in a statement following a press conference in Luanda. But Richard Howitt, a UK member of the European Parliament, said he saw foreign voters being bussed into the Cabinda province for the election and that Angolan soldiers had been present at some polling stations.**

**Luisa Morgantini, the head of the mission, stopped short of declaring the election legitimate and said observers would continue to monitor vote-counting and investigate complaints.**

**Jose Manuel Barroso, the European Commission president, called the election a step toward consolidating multi-party democracy.**

**The EU observer team will issue a full report in two months.**

The Southern African Development Community (Sadc) had said the poll was "credible, transparent and free".