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## Angolan opposition concedes election defeat

### National Union for the Total Independence of Angola acknowledges parliamentary result as ruling party strengthens hold on power

- [Mark Tran](#) and agencies
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The Angolan opposition today conceded defeat in the parliamentary elections that consolidated the ruling party's grip on power last week.

"After about 80% of valid votes have been counted, despite all that has happened, the leadership of Unita [the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola] accepts the results of the elections," the Angolan state-run Angop news agency quoted the Unita president, Isaisa Samakuva, as saying.

Samakuva's acceptance of the vote will come as a huge relief to Angolans, who have suffered one of Africa's longest civil wars.

Interne conflict broke out after the country became independent from Portugal in 1975.

There was a lull in fighting at the time of the last parliamentary election in 1992, but violence broke out again after Unita refused to accept the results.

The civil war only ended in 2002 when the notorious Unita leader Jonas Savimbi was killed.

Samakuva said he hoped the ruling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) "would govern in the interest of all Angolans."

With more than three-quarters of the votes counted, the MPLA had won around 80%, Angolan electoral officials said yesterday. Unita won around 10%.

Speculation before the vote focused less on whether the MPLA would win than on whether the party would capture the two-thirds majority needed to change the constitution.

The MPLA went into the election with 125 of parliament's 220 seats, and the overwhelming victory for President Jose Eduardo dos Santos received approval from international observers.

African Union monitors said that the vote was "free and fair", while observers from the 15-nation Southern African Development Community said the vote was "peaceful, free, transparent and credible" and reflected "the will of the people".

**"The elections were transparent ... people voted freely and we have not seen any violence nor intimidation during the campaign," the EU observer mission chief, Luisa Morgantini, said.**

Over the weekend, Unita called for balloting in the capital, Luanda, to be held again because of organisational problems.

Election officials rejected that demand yesterday, saying it had not been proven that the vote was so flawed that it needed to be repeated.

Election officials had extended voting in the city through the night on Friday and throughout Saturday after delays caused by a lack of ballot papers, an absence of polling attendants and other problems.

Presidential elections, expected to take place next year, will be critical because most power in Angola rests with the executive. Dos Santos, who has been in power since 1979, is expected to run again.

The president and the MPLA - which has been accused by international human rights groups of corruption and mismanagement - campaigned on promises to rebuild a country ravaged by war.

Angola is enjoying an economic boom because of oil. The International Monetary Fund predicts that output will surpass 2m barrels a day next year, increasing 90% from 2005 levels by 2010 and doubling government revenues.

However, more than two-thirds of Angolans live in poverty, surviving on less than \$2 (£1.13) a day