

Cooperation and Development Strategies: Angola Hosts the Conference of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP)

For 25 Years, at Least, CPLP Exists by Its Historical Name

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In Luanda, capital of Angola, hosted the 13th Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP) with the key objective of reviewing the historical past and discussing effective pathways for the future. Through its history, the CPLP has largely been known as an organization, besides that, much has been shrewd away from public domain including its development processes, collective challenges and achievements, and impact on global scene.

In July, Angola hosted the conference under the theme: “Building and Strengthening a Common and Sustainable Future” and the theme, without doubts, highlights the importance of building a common and sustainable future that promotes sustainable development and the effective improvement of the population’s quality of life.

During the conference, as expected, the heads of state and government had the opportunity to discuss relevant issues for the respective countries and establish a cooperation framework in line with the current international situation. A number of representatives also had the chance to address the strategic views for the organization.

According to reports, Angola takes over the presidency of the organization for the next two years (2021-2023). As the host of the 13th conference, at the same time, marks the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the founding of the CPLP organization, Angolan President João Lourenço, delivered his welcome and closing addresses full of all diplomatic niceties, reminding detailing the primary objectives and vividly itemizing various tasks as the way forward into the future.

Monitoring those issues, as contained in his speech, sparked off one significant proposal. President Lourenço launched the challenge of creating an investment bank for the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP). “We can be a relevant economic force if we work for this we have left the challenge of starting to think about the pertinence and feasibility of creating a CPLP Investment Bank.”

According to his analysis, belated though, the creation of this potential bank is in line with the intention to include a new economic and business pillar, one of the priorities of the Angolan CPLP presidency.

President of the Business Confederation of the Community of Portuguese-Language Countries (CE-CPLP), Salimo Abdula, explained that it was with “satisfaction” that he had heard the announcement from Angola’s President, João Lourenço, about fortification plans for an economic pillar among the members of the organization.

“We want to congratulate Angola,” Abdula said. “We know that it wants to invest in a fourth pillar – the economic one, and business cooperation. This is exactly what the Business Confederation of the CPLP (CE-CPLP) has been developing for years,” he said, adding that the idea of creating an investment bank, as proposed by President Lourenço in his inaugural speech as holder of the presidency, “is welcome, it is in fact a project that the Business Confederation has been developing for some time.”

Abdula, who comes from Mozambique, recalled that in 2014, there was a conference in Lisbon attended by representatives of central and commercial banks from almost all CPLP member states, “under the coordination and leadership of the Confederation, with the aim of studying an investment or development bank, which could support the integration of companies and not only, but also the needs for investment in infrastructure in a large part of the countries” mainly in Portuguese-language countries in Africa.

While acknowledging that this type of project is complex and takes time to implement, Abdula noted that the Confederation had, at the time, made a proposal for the CPLP to go ahead and create such a bank. “That was during the East Timor presidency, in 2014,” he recalled. It took some time to respond but, when it did, it gave a positive response, yet to date nothing has moved forward. The CE-CPLP did not, however, give up on the idea, according to Abdula.

“We have indeed consulted some states about what type of bank would be acceptable, whether with mixed capital or public capital, and the trend is towards mixed capital, that is public and private,” he said, explaining further that it would thus be “a bank with less political interference, with a more impartial governance, in order to ensure the interests of all countries across the board.”

More recently, the Confederation took up the issue again, at a business summit it organized in May in Malabo, capital of Equatorial Guinea, a CPLP member since 2014, which Abdula noted was attended by some political leaders. According to the Confederation President, “there was a positive manifestation from the government of Equatorial Guinea that it would look at this project” and several commercial banks have showed interest in this project.

Taking his turn at the conference, Portugal’s Prime Minister António Costa discussed, at length, the agreement on free movement within the Community of Portuguese-Language Countries (CPLP) and offered an assurance that parliament will ratify at the beginning of the next legislative session in September.

“The government is thus making an immediate priority of the parliamentary ratification of this agreement as well as the respective legislative framework on free movement and on academic qualifications. As soon as the work of the Portuguese parliament reopens, we will present this agreement for ratification and also the legislative framework that will allow for

speeding up both the circulation and recognition of (academic) qualifications, because this is fundamental to people's lives," Costa told the conference gathering.

Costa then referred to problems that have existed in the past between Portuguese-language countries, such as Portugal and Brazil. "With this agreement, we will not again have the crisis of Brazilian dentists in Portugal (as in the 1980s), or, more recently, of Portuguese engineers in Brazil," he said, referring to two situations where there was no mutual recognition of qualifications. Costa then moved to temper expectations, saying that the framework agreement on free movement "still requires development" and further diplomatic work.

Prime Minister of São Tomé and Príncipe Jorge Bom Jesus also comment positively on the mobility agreement will create a great space for movement and will allow movement within the CPLP. "We have to join forces to find new solutions to old structural problems, particularly from an economic point of view," he said.

It is necessary for bilateral meetings to discuss cooperation, share several economic dossiers, debt, investments in the areas of energy, agriculture, industry, human resources and other strategic investments, Jorge Bom Jesus said and added "These are precisely for us to join forces and face the problems because they are common, which is why the solutions also have to be common."

For many delegates, the conference is a platform to express primarily their views and reiterated vehemently the huge untapped potentials among the members. Portuguese-Mozambican businessman Paulo Oliveira said by illustrating the fact that the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP) is a house where you must apply for a permit to go from the bedroom to the kitchen, to illustrate barriers to investment. "The way of approach is completely different from one country to another, within the CPLP, and this, sometimes delays investment that could be carried out in a faster way," he stressed.

As a further indication of optimism, Paulo Oliveira frankly believes opening of borders to greater mobility should be gradual - without throwing the doors wide open - with businesspeople, students and cultural agents in the front line. In his argument, it is necessary to take additional collaborative efforts towards shaping business development among the members. For example, in order to enhance investments in this organization, a common CPLP visa for business people and specialized labor would be a possible mechanism. In practice, all countries have things to offer if there is a different kind of mobility.

In an interview with Portuguese News Agency Lusa in Lisbon ahead of the conference, Portugal's Foreign Minister Augusto Santos Silva indicated that Portugal expected what he described as "firmest and most absolute solidarity" from all member states of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP) over the situation in Cabo Delgado in Mozambique.

Asked about a strengthening of multilateral cooperation under the CPLP, the head of Portuguese diplomacy was more cautious, but noted that there are missions from Portugal and other countries underway as well as from organizations such as the European Union and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), to help with security in Mozambique.

The conference, however, saw some progressive steps. The members signed an Agreement

on Mobility and on Economic and Investment Cooperation.

The agreement on mobility establishes a “framework for cooperation” among all member states in a “flexible and variable” manner and, in practice, covers all citizens. Member states are offered range of solutions enabling them to take on “mobility commitments in a progressive manner with differentiated levels of integration”, taking account of their own internal specificities in their political, social and administrative dimensions.

In this context, the “freedom in the choice of the mobility modalities, of the categories of persons covered” as well as of the countries of the community with which they wish to establish partnerships. For two decades, the question on facilitating movement has been discussed consistently among the members without any concrete decision. Strengthening economic cooperation is another thorny question still on the table.

During the conference, Namibia’s President Hage Geingob commended Portuguese-speaking countries for their effort to open up borders to foster economic co-operation and hails Lusophone unity necessary for pursuing their multifaceted ambitions. He said the agreement on mobility among CPLP member states that “is an important step in making sure that our borders remain open to strengthen and promote business and economic relations in times of the pandemic.”

President Geingob added explicitly that,

“As observer states, we join hands with CPLP members to strengthen our local, regional and global governance architecture. The values of international cooperation and multilateralism that underpin the CPLP are fundamental for the promotion and strengthening of peace and security and socio-economic development. The equality of all states cannot be over-emphasized, as stipulated in the Charter of the United Nations. Let us, therefore, continue to treasure the unity of our nations, a unity forged in blood and defined by kinship.”

President of the Republic of Cabo Verde, Jorge Carlos de Almeida Fonseca, praised the political and diplomatic coordination in improving the assertion of CPLP countries in the international arena, reiterated its commitment to strengthening solidarity and cooperation aimed at ensuring the economic and social development of the peoples.

In short communique referred to as the “Luanda Declaration” signed by the Heads of State and Government and their representatives at the end of the 13th CPLP Conference, the participants reiterated their commitment to peace and harmony, the rule of law, democracy, human rights and social justice.

The leaders welcomed the choice of the motto “Building and strengthening a common and sustainable future” for the event and pledged to promote political dialogue, exchange of experiences and cooperation, with a view to enhancing the achievements of the CPLP in all areas.

As considered an additional challenge to the fulfillment of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals within the community, expressed regret at multiple factors hindering this development process. The CPLP reiterated the need to build public policies aimed at creating the necessary infrastructure to democratize access to new technologies, promoting training and education suitable for their use.

The Heads of State and Government decided to increase multilateral action in terms of capacity building, sharing of experiences, networking initiatives and development of partnerships, within the scope of promoting trade and investment aimed to preserve and create decent jobs, income and productive capacity.

They reiterated the importance of progressively integrating economic cooperation into the general objectives of the CPLP, as well as the consolidation of a multilateral community agenda for the sector, with a view to contributing to the economic and social development of the member states.

They adopted the Mobility Agreement between member states, an instrument that aims to effectively, contribute to greater circulation within the community, to increase cooperation relations in all areas and to promote the feeling of belonging to the CPLP.

Attended the ceremony also the Presidents Cabo Verde Jorge Carlos Fonseca, Guinea-Bissau Umaro Sissoco Embaló and Vice President of Brazil Hamilton Mourão. There were representatives of the Heads of State of Mozambique, East Timor and Equatorial Guinea, Special Representative of the United Nations François Lounecény Fall, as well as representatives of the United Nations and the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS).

There were social and cultural aspects of the conference. Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa donated his José Aparecido de Oliveira prize, stressing that the CPLP “is a community of common principles and values” while he presented the prize awarded by the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP), to the victims of terrorism in Cabo Delgado, northern Mozambique.

Established in 2011 and biennial in nature, the José Aparecido de Oliveira prize, named after one of the main creators of the CPLP, honors personalities and institutions that stand out in the defence, appreciation and promotion of principles and values and community objectives, as well as in carrying out studies and related research work.

Mozambique’s Leonardo Simão appointed CPLP Goodwill Ambassador, a new resolution approved at the Luanda concerns the approval of new CPLP Goodwill Ambassadors. Among those appointed for a four-year mandate, renewable for a further four years, were Leonardo Santos Simão, a former Foreign Minister of Mozambique, for the area of political and diplomatic consultation, and Filipe Silvino de Pina Zau, a University Professor and Researcher in Angola, for the Portuguese language area.

Two leading athletes from Portugal – Olympic triple-jump champion Nelson Évora, and another triple-jump athlete, Patrícia Mamona, who this year won the gold medal at the indoor European Athletics Championships, are the ambassadors for the areas of youth, sport and gender equality.

The fundamental role of CPLP Goodwill Ambassador is to “widely promote the objectives and disseminate the activities of the CPLP.” These are social and cultural developments at the 13th Conference of Heads of State and Government, chaired by Angola, so also was the signing of an agreement on free movement and the declaration of a new priority: strengthening economic relations.

With headquarters in Lisbon, CPLP is a multi-regional organization created in 1996. It

comprises Angola, Brazil, Cabo Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal, Sao Tome and Principe and East Timor. The CPLP Conference of Heads of State and Government is the community's highest organ. It meets every two years and is responsible for defining and guiding its general policy and strategies.

The Associate Observer and Consultative Observer status, without the right to vote, were established in 2005. Consultative observers, of which there are now more than 100, are civil society organizations that may develop joint projects with the CPLP. Namibia is among 19 observer countries to the CPLP together with Uruguay, Senegal, Georgia, Japan, Turkey, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Hungary, Mauritius, Argentina, Chile, Italy, Andorra, France, Luxembourg, Serbia, and the United Kingdom.

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