



## CELEBRATION OF THE 20th ANNIVERSARY OF THE ELECTION OF THE FIRST OMBUDSMAN IN ANGOLA

### FINAL COMMUNIQUÉ

On April 22 and 23, 2025, the Central Ceremony and the International Conference marking the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the election of the first Ombudsman of the Republic of Angola took place at the Auditorium of the Palace of Justice in Luanda, under the theme: ***“Ombudsman: 20 Years Serving Citizens and the Democratic Rule of Law”***, as part of the celebrations of the 50th Anniversary of National Independence. The main objective was to commemorate both the 50th anniversary of Angola’s Independence and the 20th anniversary of the election of the first Ombudsman, and to reflect on the role of the Ombudsman in a democratic state through experience-sharing with national and international public and private entities.

The central event was attended by national and international figures, distinguished guests representing the National Assembly, the Executive, the Courts, Universities, religious entities, Civil Society, public officials, among others.

The welcome address was delivered by the Honorable Ombudswoman of the Republic of Angola and President of the African Ombudsman and Mediators Association (AOMA), Dr. Florbela Rocha Araújo. She highlighted the historical journey of the Ombudsman over the past 20 years, the major challenges faced, as well as the achievements and successes. She pointed out the expansion of services in 11 provinces of the country, bringing the Ombudsman institution closer to the people, significantly increasing complaint resolution rates and boosting public trust in the institution.

She also emphasized the key international responsibilities assumed by the Ombudsman, including the presidency of AOMA, positions in the

governing bodies of the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI), and participation in the Network of Ombudsmen and National Human Rights Commissions of the CPLP.

She underlined various legal instruments signed by AOMA and reiterated the United Nations' recommendations on the duty to incorporate National Human Rights Institutions into respective constitutions or legislation.

In closing, the Ombudswoman reaffirmed the institution's commitment to being an active voice and a partner of state administration in defending citizens' rights, freedoms, and guarantees.

A video was shown summarizing key moments and testimonies from the 20-year history of the Ombudsman institution.

Another notable address was presented via videoconference by Dr. Nashieli Ramirez Hernandez, President of the International Ombudsman Institute and the Human Rights Commission of Mexico City, who congratulated the Ombudsman of Angola, led by Dr. Florbela Rocha Araújo, on the institution's 20th anniversary.

Tributes were paid to the first Ombudsman, Dr. Paulo Tjipilica, the first Deputy Ombudswoman, Dr. Maria da Conceição de Almeida Sango, and the second Ombudsman, the late Dr. Carlos Alberto Ferreira Pinto, who received certificates of recognition from Dr. Florbela Rocha Araújo for their dedication to the Ombudsman Institution.

The opening speech was delivered by the First Vice-President of the National Assembly, Dr. Américo António Cuononoca, on behalf of the President of the National Assembly. He highlighted the Ombudsman's role in defending citizens' rights, freedoms, and guarantees, acting as a watchdog over public powers, ensuring no one is left helpless in the face of judicial bureaucracy or administrative silence.

He noted that although the Ombudsman holds neither judicial nor legislative power, their voice carries significant weight in the defense of citizens, acting with impartiality, independence, and a deep commitment to the common good and human dignity.

This was followed by an award ceremony recognizing the entities that most collaborated with the Ombudsman, including some international institutions.

After the awards, a roundtable discussion was held under the theme "*The Ombudsman and the 50 Years of National Independence*", moderated by the Deputy Ombudsman of Angola, Dr. Aginaldo da Costa Cristóvão.

Four speakers participated:

1. **Dr. Maria da Conceição de Almeida Sango**, retired Constitutional Court Judge and first Deputy Ombudswoman, discussed “The Ombudsman and its History in Angola,” tracing the institution's origin and underlining the importance of the Ombudsman's report submitted to the President, National Assembly, and Attorney General as a tool for evaluating public policy.
2. **Dr. Efigénia Clemente Lima**, Vice-President of the Supreme Court, presented “The Ombudsman in the Constitution of Angola,” emphasizing its constitutional role as a bridge between citizens and state institutions.
3. **Professor Dr. Manuel Camati** addressed “The Ombudsman and Effective Judicial Protection,” detailing constitutional and legal powers, particularly the power to request the declaration of unconstitutionality as a form of objective judicial protection.
4. **Professor Dr. Carlos Feijó** spoke on “The Ombudsman, the Effectiveness of Recommendations, and Challenges,” stressing that the institution's legitimacy stems not only from law but from the prestige it earns among citizens. He raised questions about enhancing its powers, including acting as an arbitral entity or enforcing recommendations with possible criminal implications for non-compliance.

The second day was dedicated to the International Conference on “*The Ombudsman: Progress and Challenges*”, moderated by the Ombudswoman of the Republic of Malawi, Dr. Grace Malera, with speakers from Mozambique, Zambia, Botswana, Benin, and Brazil:

1. **Dr. Isaque Chande** (Mozambique) discussed the Ombudsman's role in protecting prisoners' rights as a core, yet often neglected responsibility.
2. **Dr. Caroline Sokoni** (Zambia) addressed “The Ombudsman as a Mechanism for Conflict Resolution and Social Peace,” advocating for mediation, negotiation, conciliation, and arbitration.
3. **Dr. Stephen Basi Tiroyakgosi** (Botswana) spoke on “The Ombudsman and Transparency in Public Administration,” highlighting transparency and accountability as essential to good governance.
4. **Dr. Pascal Essou** (Benin) presented “The Ombudsman and the Protection of Vulnerable Groups,” justifying intervention due to power imbalances between citizens and public administration.
5. **Dr. Márcio de Melo** (Brazil) shared Brazil's experience in linking the Ombudsman with the Public Defender's Office to protect citizens' rights.

After the Q&A session, the following conclusions were drawn:

- The opening ceremony and conference sessions proceeded smoothly, fostering knowledge-sharing among participants.
- The Ombudsman is called to be the voice of the voiceless, particularly among the most vulnerable, representing one of its noblest missions.
- The Ombudsman is a vital institution, essential for resolving conflicts between citizens and the Public Administration.

**In defense of Citizens' Rights, Freedoms, and Guarantees.**

Done in Luanda, on April 23, 2025.