

**H.E. TOKO DIAKENGA SERAO**

AMBASSADOR OF ANGOLA TO THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

# From Partnership to OPPORTUNITY

Angola and Serbia are committed to a relationship of active cooperation based on shared interests and values in bilateral relations. Collaboration between both countries manifests itself in the respect for the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the states

**I**n the first decade following the 27-year conflict in Angola, the country has emerged determined to take its place among African and world nations. Proof of this can be seen in the country's growing economy, its development of its rich natural resources, and its reaching out to other countries – such as Serbia – to showcase its potential in economic opportunity.

In February, the first deputy prime minister and minister of defence of Serbia paid an official and working visit to Angola, which he described as a great opportunity for the two countries to establish business cooperation.

Following the visit, CorD spoke with His Excellency Toko Diakenga Serao, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Angola to the Republic of Serbia.

■ **During his recent visit to Angola, the first deputy prime minister of Serbia said there were great opportunities for the two countries to establish business cooperation. What are those opportunities?**



## MODERNIZATION

Angola is now poised to enter into a phase of economic modernization and sustainable development.

## ECONOMY

The country's economy has risen an average of 9.2% over the last five years.

## COOPERATION

There are many sectors where cooperation with Serbia may be mutually advantageous, including transfer of technology.

- Angola emerged from Africa's longest conflict, which has left the country devastated for 27 years and claimed hundreds of thousands of lives. Fortunately, the conflict was brought to an end in April 2002.

Therefore, for the past decade, Angola has been in a post-conflict reconstruction process. Angola is now poised to enter into a phase of economic modernization and sustainable development, centred on stability and growth and in the improvement of the Angolan people.

The country's economy has risen an average of 9.2% over the last five years. When we take into account only the non-oil sector in the economy, we get a growth average of 12%. Angola is richly endowed with varied natural resources, including huge water resources, fertile soils, a temperate climate, rich biodiversity, and forest ecosystems. Such systems represent a support for the agricultural system and enhance its economic diversification.

Concretely speaking, the government of Angola has defined a set of priority projects in its 2013-2017 national development plan that has placed great emphasis upon structuring projects in the areas of energy, health, logistic platforms, reconstruction and the construction of secondary and tertiary roads as well as higher education, defence and internal affairs. Private initiatives are also considered as part of these national priority projects.

■ **The importance of military and economic cooperation was also underlined. What progress can be made in those areas?**

- Angola and Serbia have agreed on some military

projects. So far, the parties have signed three projects in construction of military infrastructures, namely one military hospital in Luanda, a drug factory and military base. During the visit of the first deputy prime minister and minister of defence of Serbia, the two ministers of defence of Angola and of Serbia placed the first stone on the site where the new hospital will be built. Of course, the commitments include the training of the personnel for the future hospital. Angola and Serbia are committed to a relationship of active cooperation based on shared interests and values in bilateral relations. Collaboration between both countries manifests

itself in the respect for the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the states.

The economic relations between our two countries have experienced a notable increase. We have a duty to deepen our cooperation and enhance it on renewed foundations in order to turn this partnership into real opportunities for progress of the two countries.

■ **Angola has established priorities in terms of the international economic cooperation. What are those priorities?**

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Since 2011, the government has implemented a new agricultural development strategy which is set to be a positive

driver of the sector, including the agricultural credit programme, the rejuvenation of the textile industry, and an inventory of Angola's forests and trees.

Angola is an oil exporter and its economy is heavily reliant upon the oil industry. The Angolan government is actively encouraging foreign investment in the country's mining industry, with the aim of exploiting and diversifying the country's extensive mineral resources.

Rehabilitating and expanding the nation's ports, highways and railways is key to transforming Angola into a "logistical hub of considerable importance in southern Africa." In recent years Angola's construction

► industry has been one of the top performers in sub-Saharan Africa.

A project to interconnect the three railways from Angola to Namibia, Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo is underway and expected to be completed by 2014, providing scenic ways of seeing the country. The Luanda International Airport is increasing its flight routes across the African continent and major European airlines have direct flights to Luanda.

■ **Angola is a potential investment destination for Serbian business. In what branches of the Angolan economy can they invest?**

- As with many market economies, the opportunities to invest in the Angolan economy are ruled by market law and by the principles of respect of the Angolan laws.

■ **The Serbian company Nelt has been present in Angola since 2010, while the construction company Planum has been operating in Angola, in various ways, since the 1970s. What are the advantages of breaking into Angolan and generally Sub-Saharan markets early?**

- Generally Angola does not practice any discrimination based on the one way or another. However, although the opportunities exist in all sectors of the economy interested companies must meet the relevant requirements.

■ **What are Angola's advantages as an investment destination?**

- Angola enjoys peace and stability. The country's legislation offers highly attractive incentives in the form of tax or waivers.

■ **At the end of the 27 year long war, Angola was a devastated country while today it is the fastest growing economies in the world. Rich crude oil reserves and a prudent economic policy certainly contributed to that. Could you tell us about the directions of this policy?**

- Angola is poised to build on the success of the decade when the country achieved an extraordinary average of 11.1% GDP growth per year over the decade that followed the 27 years of the conflict which ravaged the

country. The country owes the success to the advantageous price of oil and the realistic policy of the Angolan executive, under the leadership of the President Jose Eduardo dos Santos for diversification away from overreliance on oil and making investments in much needed infrastructure.

■ **Angola is one of the countries that haven't recognized Kosovo's independence. Aside from this fact, what are the good relations between Angola and Serbia based on?**

- For Angola, Serbia is the successor of Yugoslavia. Angola has great respects for Yugoslavia's supporting the Angolan people in their struggle for independence. It is about a sentiment of gratitude to a people. Moreover, it is Angola's policy to be committed to the African Union principles of intangibility of borders and the international law regarding respect for the territorial integrity of states.

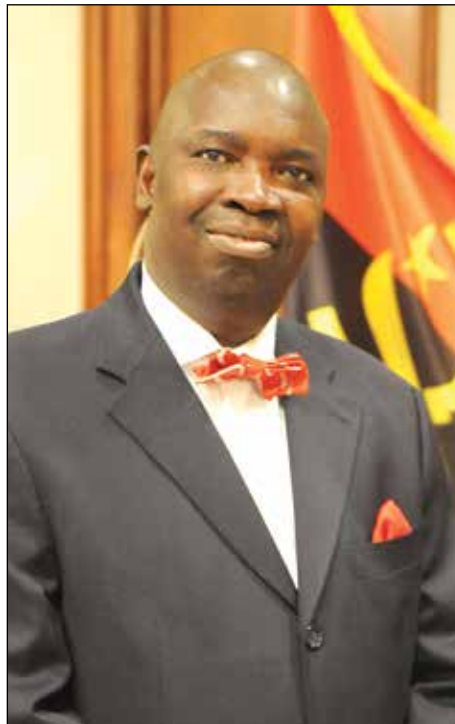
■ **It has been reported recently that Angolan businessmen have been buying land in Portugal, the country which colonized Angola for near 500 years, and which is in a very difficult financial situation today. Considering the fast developing Angolan economy, can we expect to see Angolan investments in Serbia too, and what economy segments could be of interest to Angolan businessmen?**

- There are many sectors where cooperation with Serbia may be mutually advantageous, including transfer of technology, education, and in all those areas where we recognize that

Serbian know-how can contribute to the progress of our economy.

■ **Are there any plans for Angolan and Serbian businessmen to meet in the near future?**

- We are working in order to create bonds between different sectors for economic, social and cultural links. One of the first moves is to hold a seminar on private investments in which the businessmen from the two countries can have the opportunities to meet and discuss issues of common interest. ■



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