

2011.2

juriste

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The UIA in Luanda

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Once upon a time in Luanda...

This may seem a strange title for an article in *Juriste International* but I feel that I should take this risk. I was first approached by a group of colleagues during the Seville UIA Congress in 2009 for the organisation of a UIA Seminar in Luanda, Angola, and I was immediately very enthusiastic about this idea. For the UIA, it was the first event in a Portuguese speaking African country, and for me, the opportunity to return to Luanda, the beautiful city I had left in 1975.

The first task was to sell this initiative to the UIA seminar organisation/management team, which I must say was not difficult. The second task was to ensure the close cooperation and support of the Angolan Bar Association, which was a precondition to the successful organisation of this seminar.

After accomplishing these tasks, the Organising Committee concentrated its

efforts on drafting an attractive program on «Investments in Africa - Legal and Institutional Framework - Constraints and Challenges», and it was then time to convince speakers to travel such a long way to speak for 30 minutes. Despite some last-minute cancellations, as frequently happens, the Organising Committee did a great job and the seminar had speakers from eleven different countries around the world. We even managed to convince a speaker to come from Melbourne, Australia, specifically for this seminar.

Nevertheless, I must confess it was not always easy. On the contrary, cultural differences and timing issues played their part and this seminar was in jeopardy 15 days before its scheduled date, when the number of speakers was higher than the number of participants. All turned out very well, however, and in the end we had a huge turnout with over 170 participants. We even had to turn down last-minute registrations.

The strong support we received from the Angolan Bar Association was the key to our success, and even ensured the presence of two ministers of the Angolan Government; the Angolan Minister of State, who made a very interesting presentation on the new law of investment during the opening ceremony, and the Angolan Minister of Justice who made very enlightening remarks on the Angolan legal system during the closing ceremony.

Now we are ready to face new challenges and consider new venues in Portuguese-speaking African countries, such as Mozambique or Cape Verde.

Let's do it!

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