

ADALBERTO COSTA JÚNIOR

Official Biography

Adalberto Costa Júnior was born on May 8, 1962, in Chinjenje, in what is today Huambo Province, Angola — the heartland of the Ovimbundu people and of the democratic movement he now leads. He is married and the father of five children.

His formation was shaped from its earliest years by the intersection of faith, family, and political conviction. He completed his primary education in Chinjenje and began secondary studies at the Minor Seminary of Quipeio in Caála, Huambo Province — a formative period during which, in 1975, he first met Jonas Savimbi and joined UNITA at the age of thirteen. He would become Savimbi's godson — a relationship that reflects both personal trust and the weight of history that ACJ has consciously transformed into something new. He completed his secondary education at the Liceu de Benguela and the Escola Comercial e Industrial de Benguela.

In 1977, as a secondary school student in Benguela, he witnessed one of the most traumatic episodes in Angola's post-independence history: the *Fraccionismo* crackdown of May 27, in which MPLA security forces executed hundreds of suspected political opponents in Luanda and across the country. In Benguela, he and fellow students were taken to a camp in Lobito where he watched the mass execution of prisoners. The experience, he has written, "left a deep mark on me to this day and reinforced my political convictions." It is the moment — more than any other — that explains the depth of his democratic commitment and his conviction that accountability and the rule of law are not abstract values but existential necessities.

In 1978, he moved to Luanda to avoid forced military conscription, and in 1980 made his way to Portugal. There he pursued higher education while simultaneously building UNITA's organized presence in the Portuguese-speaking diaspora. He completed his pre-university studies at the Escola Comercial e Industrial Fontes Pereira de Melo in Porto and went on to earn a degree in Electrotechnical Engineering from the Instituto Superior de Engenharia do Porto — a rigorous technical formation that has shaped his analytical, problem-solving approach to governance. He subsequently completed a course in Public Ethics at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome — the same institution where generations of Catholic social teaching have been refined and transmitted — adding to his formation in the principles of democratic accountability, the common good, and governance in service of the citizen rather than the party.

He also undertook courses in journalism, political communication and marketing, and Italian language during his years in Europe — skills that, combined with his engineering precision, have made him one of the most effective political communicators on the African continent.

His European years were not years of comfortable exile. From the moment of his arrival in Portugal, he was actively organizing — first as a leader of JURA, UNITA's youth movement — and rose steadily through the party's external structures. In the late 1980s, as a student in Porto and already responsible for party committees, he led the UNITA delegation that received

Savimbi on a visit to Porto. In 1991, he was summoned to UNITA's headquarters at Jamba and appointed UNITA's Representative in Portugal — a position he held through 1996. In 1996, Savimbi appointed him UNITA's Representative to Italy and the Vatican, a post he held until 2002. In those roles he was responsible for UNITA's diplomatic representation in two of the continent's most important political capitals, managing relationships with European parliaments, the Catholic Church hierarchy, and the international community at the height of Angola's most devastating period of conflict. He acquired Portuguese citizenship during this period — citizenship he subsequently renounced in 2019 under political pressure from the MPLA government, which sought to use it as grounds to challenge his eligibility for Angolan political leadership.

Following Savimbi's death in February 2002 and the formal end of the civil war with the Luena Memorandum of April 2002, Costa Júnior returned to Angola permanently in 2003. He assumed the role of UNITA's national spokesperson — the public face of a party rebuilding itself from the ruins of war into a functioning democratic institution. He also served as National Secretary for Patrimonial Affairs of UNITA from 2009 to 2011. From 2012 to 2015 he served as Vice President of UNITA's Parliamentary Group, and from 2015 to 2019 as President of the UNITA Parliamentary Group — the leader of the opposition's National Assembly delegation, responsible for legislative strategy, parliamentary debate, and the institutional confrontation with MPLA governance that would gradually restore UNITA's political credibility.

In November 2019, at UNITA's 13th Congress, Adalberto Costa Júnior was elected President of UNITA — only the third person to lead the party in its 53-year history, succeeding Jonas Savimbi and Isaías Samakuva. He was elected with 594 votes, or 53.4% of the congress delegates on the first round, defeating four other candidates. The MPLA's response was immediate and revealing: in October 2021, Angola's Constitutional Court — in a ruling widely condemned as politically motivated — annulled his 2019 election as party leader. The decision came on the very same day that UNITA had announced a coalition with allied opposition groups, a timing that removed any pretense of judicial independence. Costa Júnior called the ruling "an attack on democracy without legal basis." Within weeks, UNITA's delegates convened a new congress and re-elected him with 96% of the vote — 1,121 of 1,169 valid ballots cast. The MPLA's attempt to decapitate the opposition had produced the opposite result, consolidating his authority and demonstrating that UNITA's democratic commitment extended to its own internal processes.

Under his leadership, UNITA achieved results in the August 2022 general elections that transformed Angola's political landscape. The party received 44% of the official vote — and by credible independent parallel counts, actually won the popular majority with approximately 50.2% of votes cast — against a governing party with five decades of institutional advantages, state media control, and administrative penetration into every corner of the country. UNITA won 90 seats in the 220-member National Assembly, up from 51, and crucially won the capital Luanda with 63% of the vote. For the first time in Angola's history, a governing party's parliamentary majority fell below the two-thirds threshold required to amend the constitution. Costa Júnior contested the official results through the Constitutional Court, demanding a transparent recount — continuing, as he had promised, the fight through institutions rather than through arms. When the court dismissed the challenge without reviewing a single result sheet,

UNITA's deputies took their seats and began their work as Angola's principal democratic opposition.

In July 2024, under Costa Júnior's direction, UNITA activated an unprecedented constitutional mechanism: a formal request for the impeachment of President João Lourenço before the National Assembly — the first such motion in Angolan history. While the MPLA's parliamentary majority ensured it could not succeed, the action demonstrated UNITA's commitment to using every available institutional tool and sent an unambiguous signal that Angola's opposition understood its constitutional role.

In November 2025, at UNITA's 14th Congress, Costa Júnior was re-elected President of UNITA with 91% of the vote, defeating Jonas Savimbi's own son Rafael Massanga Savimbi in the process — a result that both confirmed his commanding authority within the party and symbolically completed the transition of UNITA's identity from a movement defined by its founder to a democratic institution defined by its values.

On April 30, 2026, Adalberto Costa Júnior was elected Fourth Vice President of the Pan-African Parliament, the legislative organ of the African Union, during a plenary session in Ethiopia. Angola's candidacy won decisively with 113 votes against 64 for the competing candidate from the Kingdom of Eswatini. His election to the PAP Bureau — the presiding leadership of Africa's continental parliament — represents the formal continental recognition of his stature as one of Africa's most consequential democratic leaders.

Adalberto Costa Júnior has described his vision for Angola in terms that are both precise and unambiguous: "The time has come to build a better country, without unrealistic promises or megalomaniac projects — a working Angola where everyone has a place and to which everyone can contribute. The time has come to put an end to corruption, to theft, the time has come for democratic change." His platform — built on anti-corruption, judicial independence, transparent governance, private sector development, and Angola's active integration into the community of democratic nations — represents a clear and substantive alternative to five decades of one-party rule.

He is a communicator of unusual sophistication in the African political context, deploying social media — particularly short-form video that addresses Angolans directly on the issues of daily life — with a precision and accessibility that reflects both his engineering training and his deep understanding of a citizenry that is more than 60% under the age of 25. In the assessment of Alex Vines, who leads the Africa Programme at Chatham House: "There is definitely a buzz around Adalberto Costa."

In the 2027 elections — Angola's sixth multiparty contest since independence — Adalberto Costa Júnior leads UNITA as its presidential candidate, seeking to lead his country to its first democratic alternation of power in 52 years of independence.