



Kofi Annan
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OPENING REMARKS BY H.E. MR. KOFI A. ANNAN
‘The Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation: Two Years On, Where Are We?’
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Right Honourable Prime Minister,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a privilege for me to welcome you all to this important meeting which is being followed closely right across Kenya and the wider region.

We meet two years after the historic and courageous agreement to end Kenya's grave political crisis.

The National Accord committed Kenya to an ambitious reform programme to secure lasting peace, stability, and justice through the rule of law and respect for human rights.

These are goals which are as important to Kenya's future and to its citizens as they were two years ago.

So the aim of this meeting is, through frank and open discussion, to examine the progress made, to identify the challenges that remain, and to find ways to re-energise the reform agenda.

It is Kenya and its citizens who, of course, must control their own future.

But what happens here has an impact well beyond Kenya's borders.

The entire region felt the shockwaves of Kenya's political crisis two years ago.

A stable and successful Kenya, in contrast, will help you and your neighbours prosper.

So there is huge interest, support and good will in the region - and the wider international community - for Kenya's revitalization through the comprehensive implementation of Agenda 4.

Ladies and gentlemen, the world has looked with admiration at the progress made so far.

Kenya brought a halt to conflict and violence.

A new Constitution, containing a progressive Bill of Rights and devolved governance structure, was drawn up with broad consultation, and overwhelmingly supported by its citizens.

Kenyans can take great pride in this achievement.

Ordinary citizens, the Executive, Parliament, civil society, religious leaders, the media, and the business community - with the support of international partners - all came together to deliver the best for this country.

Agreement on the new Constitution was an essential first step to put this country on the road to the new future Kenyans so desperately seek.

But it is not, of course, enough on its own.

The Constitution is the beginning, not the end.

The challenge now lies in its implementation.

Its ideals and ambitions must be put into practice.

We all appreciate the complexity of the task before you. However, the expectations of Kenyans are high.

They want to see transparent and accountable decision-making; to feel the impact of reform in their daily lives; and for the national good to be put before narrow self-interest.

The unity of purpose at the top has been a major factor in progress so far.

Let me once again pay tribute to President Mwai Kibaki and Prime Minister Raila Odinga for setting the right tone and their commitment to working together.

There is an urgent need to see this spirit of co-operation continue and expanded across the Coalition Government and Parliament to consolidate the gains of the new Constitution and to accelerate the broader reform agenda.

Parliament has a special responsibility in this regard.

Your oversight role is critical, but must not outweigh your responsibility to keep the process on track and moving forward as a cohesive whole.

The tenth Parliament has the chance to earn its place in history, by not only delivering a new Constitution, but making it work for the good of the entire country.

Kenyans have made clear that there are areas where progress has been slow or disappointing. And we shall hear more about this, and ways to overcome these challenges, over the next two days.

While steps have been taken to address the root causes of the post-election violence, too little has been done to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Impunity is a major problem yet to be fully addressed.

Ladies and Gentleman, I would like to emphasise that impunity is not a Kenyan problem alone. When I travel throughout our continent, I meet Africans from all walks of life who demand justice: from their own courts if possible, from international courts if no credible alternative exists.

The ICC does not supplant the authority of national courts. Rather, it is a court of last resort, governed by the principles of complementarity.

We shall hear from the Prosecutor, Mr. Moreno-Ocampo, later this morning - but let me stress that bringing to justice those responsible for the post-election violence is essential to help Kenya heal its wounds, and prevent such crimes from being committed again.

In doing so, we must understand that no single community or group is being targeted. It's about bringing individuals to account for crimes they have committed and ensuring that victims receive justice.

The Government must do more to ensure that witnesses and their families are protected and that human rights defenders are not subject to intimidation. Reconciliation also requires a society to face up more widely to the violations and misdeeds of the past.

Only then can all Kenyans feel that their rights will be respected in the future.

The Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) and the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) have an important role to play here.

The NCIC's work has begun to have an impact. But its work must be further enhanced and linked to the efforts of grassroots organizations.

We must also see its mandate reaffirmed following the passage of the new Constitution.

Kenya's diverse ethnic communities also have an important role in helping foster reconciliation and prevent the escalation of tensions.

The country's Muslim community has already shown maturity and responsibility in the run-up to the referendum.

Their determination to avoid provocation and reduce tensions over the issue of Kadhi's Courts avoided a religious dimension being added to an ethnically-charged debate. What an excellent example!

With a more systematic approach to reconciliation, it will also be easier to find a durable solution to the continuing challenges faced by Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

The inability of so many people to return safely to their homes is not just a human tragedy. Until a fair and lasting solution is found, there is always a danger that their plight will be used to stoke divisions and conflict.

Ladies and Gentleman, right at the top of the agenda for reform are demands to tackle corruption.

It is a fight, like that against impunity, which must not be politicized nor ethnicised.

But nor can it be avoided.

Corruption is a scourge that the Government and all of society must deal with comprehensively, and on a sustained basis at every level.

Chapter 6 of the new Constitution, on Leadership and Integrity, provides clear guidance on building a culture of transparency and accountability in public institutions.

All branches of Government and the public must remain vigilant to ensure they are followed so the cancer of corruption is rooted out.

Indeed, if the Constitution is to play its full role in providing the foundation for a new Kenya, it is vital that it is fully and widely understood.

A comprehensive civic education programme will help foster this understanding, and build support for the difficult decisions that have to be made.

Electoral reforms are similarly important. These should begin in earnest.

The successful conduct of the referendum has begun the process of restoring people's confidence in Kenya's new electoral institutions.

But the true test will come at the next General Elections.

Work needs to begin immediately to ensure electoral institutions and systems are ready.

At the same time, we need to see greater coherence and cohesion within the Coalition.

The two leaders have set an example by consulting regularly and jointly setting out policy on important national issues.

In the remaining period before the elections, this must be continued and extended across the entire government.

It is important that the members of the Coalition Government resolve their differences systematically, and prevent the spillover of disputes into the public domain.

Ladies and Gentleman, I hope at this conference we can identify the priorities to speed up progress to achieve the goals of the National Accord and fulfill the aspirations of millions of Kenyans.

But some of the answers are already clear:

First, the Government must remain faithful, as I know it recognizes, to the values and spirit of the new Constitution.

Second, all Kenyans must be involved in turning its principles into practical policies.

Third, Kenya's political leaders must place the national interest above narrow sectional or self-interest.

Fourth, all civil society actors, including the business community and the mainstream and vernacular media, must continue to play their indispensable role in ensuring Kenya's renewal.

Finally, there must be sustained support and engagement by international partners for the reform process.

I believe Kenya has a historic opportunity to transform this new beginning into real progress that can deliver long-term stability and prosperity for all.

This opportunity must not be wasted.

The campaigns for the next General Election will make progress much harder.

So the next few months are critical.

I urge all Kenyans to remain committed and focused on what is at stake – the realization of a new Kenya, grounded in a new progressive Constitution, in the values of a new independent Republic, individual dignity, and the rule of law.

The momentum for reform must not be allowed to slow.

Good intentions must be turned into tangible progress in the everyday lives of Kenya's citizens.

The people of this great country expect the discussions over the next two days to be both frank and focused.

I know you will not disappoint them.