

ELEMENTS OF H.E. KOFI ANNAN'S COMMENTS TO THE PRESS

Nairobi Serena Hotel, 19 April 2008, at 14:10

Kofi ANNAN: Good afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen. It has been a great pleasure for me to be here, back in Kenya, to see the swearing-in of the new Government. I think that is significant for Kenya because there still is a lot of work to do to ensure that the country remains stable on the path to stability, peace and development. I think some of the most outstanding issues and tasks that we need to tackle not only by the Government but with the support of the people of Kenya is to address the long term issues that most people agree constitute the root causes of the recent crisis. If we are able to deal with these issues we will not have the experience of 2007 or previous elections. Here I am referring to the comprehensive constitutional reform, land and institutional reform, poverty and inequitable development, unemployment – particularly among the youth – national cohesion and the fight against corruption. All these issues are extremely important and fall under Agenda Item four. The parties agreed to the agenda at a very early stage and I trust they will see it through. They must follow through and complete the agenda. Last Thursday after the swearing-in ceremony I met with the mediation team and we had a very constructive and good discussion with Ambassador Adeniji and others [...] I got the feeling that they all want to move forward and genuinely implement these proposals as a team, as two parties coming together, and that is the only way we can implement the agenda. I think it is also extremely important that you, the people of Kenya, and civil society, continue to remain engaged and work with the politicians to implement the agenda programme. I have the firm impression that everyone is determined to address the issues. We had a constructive meeting and this will continue next week under the mediation of Ambassador Adeniji. I expect they should be able to conclude items under agenda item four by the end of the week. We had a constructive discussion with a clear idea of how to proceed to bring about such a conclusion by road maps that would be necessary to address all these issues. And let me assure you that the international community will stand by you as you go through these reform processes. I myself and the other Panel members – who unfortunately could not be here today - will also remain engaged. I think it is not only important that we proceed with the agenda but that we also set up a

monitoring mechanism to constantly remind us of what we have achieved, where we are succeeding, where we are failing and why, to be able to accelerate the process. And so, I leave you tonight convinced that this process will be brought to a successful conclusion. We will stay the course, and politicians will stay the course and honour the commitments and promises they have made – to be able to complete the reform. I know that it is a heavy agenda that requires hard work, patience and persistence. We must understand that reform is a process, not an event, and it will take time, will and determination. But I am sure you will find that will and determination to conclude the work you have set yourselves. You have lots of support, lots of good will, it can be done. Thank you.

KTN Television: Are you satisfied with the implementation of the agreement apart from the outstanding agenda item four? And only yesterday we heard that the [Opposition in Zimbabwe] met with Raila Odinga [inaudible question].

Kofi ANNAN: Let me start by saying that you have a heavy agenda. There is no place for armed militias inside society. They must be disarmed. They can not be allowed to take the law into their own hands. I am confident that the Government is taking measures to disarm them. If they have legitimate grievances they should put them on the table and let the Government try to sort it out. It is unacceptable that they take the law into their own hands and intimidate their fellow citizens. There are other processes which we have already established, the Independent Review Commission, and I think that next week the Government should be able to announce the establishment of the Committee to look into the post-electoral violence, they should proceed very quickly. There is the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission where activities are being undertaken. On the question of Zimbabwe, there has been substantial international attention. It is a rather dangerous situation [inaudible, but stressing an African solution to the crisis. “We do have a responsibility to work with them to find a viable solution”] We have just been through a crisis here and I must say that credit goes to the Kenyan people and the African Union for finding an African solution to an African problem, so it is not that the continent cannot solve its problems or does not have the capacity to solve this problem. What is required is determination and action to do so. I think the Kenyan example is relevant and whether Kenya would help find a solution is something I will leave to the Kenyan Government to decide.

SABC: What were your discussions with MDC yesterday and are you willing to go to Zimbabwe?

Kofi ANNAN: No-one has invited me to go to Zimbabwe. I think there is a process one has to go through. I did meet with the MDC Secretary General, he came to brief me on the developments, and I listened to him [...]

SABC: So if invited, you will be willing to go?

Kofi ANNAN: We will jump that bridge when we get there. I think I already have my hands full with Kenya and we need to continue the process. As I indicated, I will stay engaged and work with the Kenyan people and the Kenyan Government to bring this process to conclusion.

AFP [on Zimbabwe]: Are you disappointed that African Presidents have failed to resolve the crisis?

Kofi ANNAN: We have many crises on this continent. Some have lasted as long as 20 years. One should try and contain it before it gets out of hand. In the Kenyan situation we had several people from Desmond Tutu to President Kufuor, Presidents Chissano and Mkapa, all trying to help, and other international friends such as the US and the European Union, all trying their best. I was asked by the African Union to come.

AP: In several African countries there is a real concern over the rising cost of food. How do you propose the situation be handled?

Kofi ANNAN: I am speaking in the capacity of Chair of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa [AGRA]. We identified food security in Africa as one of the key problems several years ago and we commissioned a study by the Academy of Sciences on African agriculture on what was wrong and what we had to do about it. We then formed AGRA to look into how we can increase food production and ensure food security on the continent with seeds, soil improvement, water, storage, access to markets, in other words, help improve all along the value chain. Scientists were working on better seeds, we have a soils programme where we agreed to work with the farms – but this takes time. Some countries have managed to improve their production, for instance Malawi, but African Governments have to focus on agriculture and come out with policies which are supportive of rural development. Agriculture also creates jobs. We should help the farmers to

keep up their production. We have serious food shortages around the world. Given the demand for seeds and bio-fuels, there is such pressure on food prices and they have gone up so we have seen food strikes [inaudible] we are going to see more of this, as it puts more pressure on the poor. From here we will need to also look to our international partners to see what we can do about it. The World Food Programme has made appeals for more resources and I know that some governments are also reviewing their whole programmes [inaudible] For instance; it takes 700 calories to feed a cow to get 100 human calories. So you see the pressure.

[Reporter asking for comments on Ugandan President Museveni's statements during the swearing-in ceremony in which he lashed out at international institutions such as the World Bank and IMF]

Kofi ANNAN: I don't think we should go about blaming [these institutions or others] We should be able to take responsibility for our own situation and show leadership [...] We Africans cannot keep blaming old colonialists for our problems, we cannot constantly keep looking for institutions or countries to blame. We have choices. We should be able to take responsibility.

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