

TRANSCRIPT OF ELEMENTS OF A PRESS ENCOUNTER

BY H.E. KOFI ANNAN

In front of the Nairobi Serena Hotel

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ANNAN: Good afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen. As you know, yesterday I issued a statement indicating that the talks were not moving at the pace I would like to see and went to consult the leaders.

I had expected much faster progress this morning and today, but that was not to be. And given the way the talks are going and the mediators are relating to each other, I believe it is important that I suspend the negotiations, not as an act of desperation or giving up, but suspend the negotiations and take the matters up with President Mwai Kibaki and the Honorable Raila Odinga.

The leaders have to assume their responsibilities and become directly engaged in these talks. Because the way it is going now, if I do not get them to engage, and get them to give the instructions or negotiate directly with me, the process might take much longer.

The nation cannot afford it. We are in a very dangerous situation—we all know that. It is a crisis situation that we are trying to manage. And we need to understand the urgency and the need for speed. I trust the two leaders understand this and will work with me expeditiously to resolve the crisis the country is in.

Time is of the essence. I hear the voices of ordinary Kenyans, men, women and children, pleading for nothing but peace and stability. They have been traumatized, they've gone through an incredible experience, we have hundreds of thousands displaced, we have many people who are losing their jobs. The economy can still take a further downturn. It is important that leaders who have been elected to govern this country take their responsibility.

So I'm going to engage them in the hope that we will be able to speed up the process. Honestly, as I said yesterday, if there had been good will and

determination, we should have been able to resolve the issues we're discussing today two weeks ago.

And so I hope people will understand. This is a move intended to speed up action, intended to speed up the solution we all want. The Panel of Eminent [African Personalities] are committed, committed to working with the people of Kenya in finding a solution to the current crisis—not a patch-up job, but a solution that will deal with the root causes of some of the issues, the historic injustices that have existed for so long, a solution that will give us a comprehensive constitutional review, deal with the issue of land, tackle inequity, take a critical look at youth unemployment and what to do, a solution that will push for equitable access to opportunity.

This is why President Mkapa, Graça Machel and myself have taken so much time to be here to work with you and we are going to persist, but we need to move with all deliberate speed. And all parties must understand that we are living a crisis. This is an extraordinary situation, and it takes extraordinary measures and steps to bring it under control.

We cannot pretend as if nothing has happened. We cannot pretend as if we can continue doing business as we used to. That is not an option.

So please understand, I'm going to engage the leaders, and I know all of you support the peace process. We're going to engage them in the hope that we will find a way of moving much faster than we have up till today.

So the sessions are suspended for the moment, and I will discuss with the leaders how we move forward and how we're going to work with them to find a solution.

[Former Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa, another member of the Panel of Eminent African Personalities who has been participating in the talks, then rendered Mr. Annan's comments in Swahili.]

ANNAN: We'll take one or two questions.

QUESTION: [A journalist said that when things didn't go well in the negotiations yesterday, Mr. Annan went to see leaders. Now that things didn't go well today, he is again going to see the leaders. What do the leaders have to do today, he asked, that they didn't do yesterday?]

ANNAN: That's a very good question. Yesterday, I indicated that we were not making progress. We were discussing issues that the parties seemed incapable of resolving and we were turning around in circles. And I went to see the leaders to explain the situation and to urge them to give proper instructions, specific and direct instructions, to their mediators, not only to press ahead but to conclude and make a deal. What is the point of being described as a good negotiator who can never make a deal?

If it is really important—so when we met this morning, I expected rapid progress and a change of mood and a change of method of working and an enhanced understanding of the urgency under which we were working. I did not see that. We have hardly made any progress today. And so I believe that the discussions at some stage were very acrimonious. And I think it is important that the leaders themselves take charge. Either they take charge by giving clear instructions to their mediators or I engage them directly and they negotiate with me so that there's no misunderstanding as to where they are and where the mediators are. And this is an issue I am going to discuss with them. But we cannot continue on the current basis.

QUESTION: [A journalist asks a similar question.]

ANNAN: I thought I answered that question. I answered that question with the [last words]. I want the leaders to engage directly and put their own views forward and not necessarily sit behind while the negotiators are going on and we are not able to make progress. We started well; we made very good progress on the issue of how to stop the violence, on the humanitarian issue, on the first part of Item 3, How to Resolve the Political Conflict, but we are on an issue, the governance structure, and how we structure ourselves to undertake the reforms that have been promised. And we are not making progress. I suspect there are all sorts of reasons, because this is an issue that eventually will affect individuals, that will affect political parties. But as I said from the beginning, this is not about the fortunes of political parties or of individuals. This is about Kenya, it's about the country, it's about the region. And we should be able to rise above individual or political interests to deal with these issues as we should.

And everyone must also understand that we're dealing with an extraordinary situation and it requires extraordinary measures and everybody should be prepared to operate along that basis. And I don't think that everyone has understood that.

[Former President Mkapa again gave the message in Swahili.]

ANNAN: Let me finally appeal to the population and stress that the talks have not broken down. The talks are still on, but I'm taking steps to ensure that we accelerate the process and we give peace to the people as soon as possible and move ahead at a much faster pace than we have done the last two weeks. The people deserve that. All they are demanding is peace, stability and return to normalcy and security and the leaders owe it to them, and as quickly as possible. And this is what we are aiming for.

Thank you very much.

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