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PRESS STATEMENT FROM MR. KOFI ANNAN CHAIRMAN OF THE AU PANEL OF EMINENT AFRICAN PERSONALITIES.

As the official campaign on the Proposed Constitution of Kenya begins, we should all remember the horror and tragedy that followed the 2007 elections. At that time, the two Principals rightly recognized that without addressing the deep-seated and long-standing divisions within Kenyan society, the very existence of Kenya as a unified country was threatened. It was for this reason that the Coalition Government, under their leadership, committed itself to implement a coherent and far-reaching reform agenda. The constitutional reform is a centrepiece of this agenda.

My fellow Panel members and I commend President Kibaki and Prime Minister Odinga for their patriotism, wisdom and leadership in pulling the country back from the precipice in 2008 and for working together to ensure a peaceful, stable, united and democratic Kenya.

The Kenyan Constitution belongs to the people of Kenya. The 4 August 2010 referendum is a crucial opportunity for all Kenyans to exercise their democratic right to vote. I urge everyone to conduct themselves in accordance with the law and in a spirit of national unity. Disagreements over a few paragraphs in the proposed Constitution should not be allowed to divide the country.

The future of Kenya is now in the hands of every Kenyan. I applaud your determination to strengthen the foundation of democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights. Those who can should vote. In deciding your vote, Kenyans should set aside personal and sectional interests and focus on what is good for Kenya and its future. I urge that the referendum be conducted in a free, transparent and peaceful manner.

The Panel and the international community stand ready to support Kenya as it takes this important step to strengthen its democracy.

Long live a one and united Kenya!

[STATEMENT ENDS]