



Next Steps for Resolving the Crisis in Kenya

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

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SECRETARY RICE: Good afternoon. I've just completed discussions first this morning with former Secretary General Kofi Annan, who is on behalf of the African Union and the international community here to try and help the Kenyan people and their leadership come to an end to the stalemate and the crisis that has been at the core of difficulty for this country for some time now. I then had an opportunity to speak with President Kibaki and then later on with Mr. Odinga. I've also had a chance to speak with several members of civil society and the business community.

And my very clear message has been that it is extremely important that this country be able to move forward. That means that the political leaders from all persuasions, all sides, need to come to an agreement. They need to have a power-sharing arrangement which will allow the governance of Kenya to go forward. Kofi Annan has made good progress in working with the parties to close several outstanding issues. There is the remaining issue of governance, and that structure needs to be decided. There needs to be a coalition. They need to share power and share responsibility for the governing of this country.

I was especially moved to listen to the members of civil society and the business community talk about the impatience, frankly, of the Kenyan people that this be resolved. And that is because this is a country that is and has been on the road to more democracy and to better governance, and it needs to return to that road. This is not a time for personal agendas. This is a time for putting at the forefront the good of Kenya and the good of the Kenyan people.

I know that Kofi Annan is going to continue to conduct his mediation. The teams for the parties are going to continue to meet. And I am really here to say that the United States, as a friend of the Kenyan people, as the United States respecting the Kenyan people and their traditions and their desire for progress, will obviously continue to follow the situation, to do what we can to assist Kofi Annan as he moves forward.

But again, just to strongly underscore that this is a crisis that needs to end and needs to end soon. Thank you very much, and now I'll take a couple of questions. Is there a Kenyan reporter from whom I can take a question? Yes.

QUESTION: Beatrice Marshall, KTN. Now, Dr. Rice, President Bush has said there must be a full return to democracy. What does the U.S. envision as the necessary steps and signs to make this happen in Kenya?

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you. Well, first of all, I think that the four items that Kofi Annan and the parties have agreed to in the framework – that is, first of all, that there must be an end to violence, a total renunciation of violence as an option, a refusal in any fashion to return to the violence that took the lives of so many innocent Kenyans – that is, first and foremost, the most important plank of any platform to move forward.

Secondly, there needs to be agreement that the parties are going to allow a electoral truth to be found, which means that a commission that can look into what happened in the election, which clearly was not a good day for Kenyan democracy although Kenyans obviously tried to exercise their democratic rights and we congratulate them on having done so. There does need to be an understanding and accounting for what happened in the elections.

Third, there needs to be a way to govern Kenya now, and that is going to require political compromise on the part of the major parties so that Kenya can move forward.

And then finally, there needs to be, as there was supposed to have been over the last several years, constitutional reform, electoral reform, a number of other reforms that really need to be made so that this country has a firm foundation for democracy moving forward.

And so that is really what's meant by returning to the democratic path. I think it's been laid out. But sometimes in democracies, there are crises, and the key is to use any crisis as an opportunity to put the country on a firmer footing. And that was the message that I gave and talked with the parties about and that I just talked also with civil society, the business community. And indeed, I think the role of the press here has been similarly supportive of a return to the democratic enterprise.

MODERATOR: Reuters, Bryson Hull.

QUESTION: Good afternoon, Madame Secretary. You've said that the United States is willing to take some steps to make sure that a solution is found, power-sharing goes forward. Can you elaborate on what those steps would be and under what timeframe you would be working?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I frankly believe that the time for a political settlement was yesterday. It is really important that this be done and done urgently. Now, not everything can be done very quickly. Obviously, some of the reforms are going to take some time, and that's good. But Kenyans, I sense, need to believe that this country is moving forward, that it is not locked in a political stalemate, that the parties are prepared to make the necessary compromises so that the country can be governed after the events of the elections.

And so that is why I'm here is to support that mediation. Kofi Annan talked yesterday with the President. The President again offered that we are prepared to help in any way that we can. I also have talked to a number of my colleagues around the world who are prepared to do the same thing.

But the United States is ready, for instance, to support civil society in making certain that there is accountability as constitutional and other reforms go forward. There is no greater accountability for democratically elected leaders than to have a civil society that is strong and mature and able to keep check on what's going on. And so we've been supportive of civil society. We're prepared to do more.

We obviously are very concerned about the displaced people and the need to take care of people who have been displaced from their homes. The United States has already helped with humanitarian assistance. We are prepared to do more for reconstruction, for resettlement of peoples, for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the infrastructure. These are the kinds of the things that the United States, in conjunction with the international community, could do for a government that is moving forward.

But I want to be very clear: The current stalemate and the circumstance are not going to permit business as usual with the United States or, I think, with any other part of the international community. Kenya must be moving forward. We have been good friends with Kenya and we will be good friends – the United States – with Kenya and the Kenyan people. That requires now that this country be put on a firmer footing. And so that's how – those are some of the things that we can do to help. But I'm here principally to lend our support and our voice to the importance of getting this done and to Kofi Annan in particular.

Thank you very much.

QUESTION: Can we have one more question?

SECRETARY RICE: Yes.

QUESTION: What was the reaction that you received today when you delivered your message about the power sharing (inaudible) two main individuals?

SECRETARY RICE: Yes.

QUESTION: And you said this morning you were talking about real power sharing. What does that mean? What is real power sharing and what isn't real power sharing?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, real power sharing means to me that the parties that come to any kind of coalition have to actually have responsibilities and authorities that matter. It can't be that there is simply the illusion of power sharing. It has to be real.

I do believe that I heard from both parties a well understood need to get an agreement, a desire to get an agreement. These are – all of them, I think – Kenyan patriots. They want to see this country move forward. It won't surprise you that there are differences about how that might go forward, but I've had very detailed and in-depth discussions. I've passed on to Kofi Annan some of my hearing, some of what I heard, and he can now take that and reengage the parties to what I hope will be a solution that really does recognize that there are parties here who are going to share in the power and share in the responsibility of governing this country. And by the way sharing in the responsibility also means putting aside forever, for good, all means of violence, any claim to violence. And that perhaps is the most important message.

Thank you very much. Thank you.

QUESTION: One local?

SECRETARY RICE: All right. Local question, really quick.

QUESTION: Will the U.S. be prepared to impose sanctions, first of all? And number two, your counterpart here in Kenya said that, in his own words, outsiders should not dictate to Kenya; in other words, don't hold a gun to our heads in, you know, moving forward. What do you say?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, first, as to what other things the United States might do on the other side, you know, I'm not going to speculate. I do think that we've made clear that we would not countenance people who have been involved in violence against innocent people or manipulations of certain sorts. That is – that's something that the United States maintains worldwide. And of course, we'll look at the issues here case by case in that regard. And I think the Ambassador has been clear on that and he'll continue to be clear on that.

As to the international community, look, Kenya is a friend and I want to underscore again that Kenya is a friend. Kenya is also an independent and proud country with independent and proud people. And so this is not a matter of dictating a solution to Kenyans. But what I hear is the impatience and the insistence of Kenyans that this be resolved. I have been very impressed in my discussions with civil society, with the business community, in what I've read in your editorials and what I've seen in your headlines, that it's Kenyans who are insisting that their political leaders, their political class, find a solution to this crisis so that Kenya can move forward.

So to the degree that the international community, through Kofi Annan or through visits like my own, can help, we should, because we are after all one international community. There are certain standards concerning democracy that we all understand. And that's what I'm here to do. But I would just object to the word "dictate." I don't think anybody is trying to dictate a future to Kenya. But I do think that the Kenyan people, supported by the international community, are insisting that there be a political resolution of this so that Kenya can move forward.

Thank you.

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