

# VOICES OF REASON

NETWORK OF REFORMERS

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Thursday, November 17, 2005

## **PRESS STATEMENT**

### ***The Great Leap Forward*** ***Securing Kenya's Future in the Post-Referendum Period***

#### **What did Kenyans set out to achieve?**

In the last one and a half decades, Kenyans from all walks of life made great sacrifices to achieve new political, social and economic order. They aspired for democratic participation, respect for human rights, an accountable government and a country of opportunities for all citizens to realize their full potential. They aspired and fought for a new nation with the hallmarks of democracy, freedom, responsibility, dignity and prosperity, all firmly secured in an appropriate constitutional order.

The country has in the search for this goal encountered numerous challenges and bottlenecks, but has in spite of this adversity maintained a unity of purpose and stubbornly kept in focus the vision of a better land for its present and future generations.

#### **What have Kenyans achieved?**

We can now proudly cite numerous gains accumulated since the rise of what nearly everyone now regards to be a second liberation. To be sure, the social and political future of the country and its entire people is unmistakably full of potential that lies in wait for our collective pursuit and realization.

Kenyans broadened the political space to agitate for more and continue the struggle for their original vision

The country's path to the goals as set out to accomplish greater heights reveals important milestones such as the removal of a longstanding authoritarian political regime from office in the 2002 general elections and some steps towards a new and widely acceptable constitution.

### **What are the Challenges?**

Numerous factors have surfaced and constrained the process, in a way that is admittedly unsurprising for a task that is as mammoth and critical to the life of a country such as the task of constitution making and the consolidation of the gains of a second liberation struggle.

- A closer and more careful reexamination of the present social and political context in which the referendum process is due to take place as well as the unfolding impact of the referendum campaigns leaves little doubt that Kenya will still be left in a doldrums, whatever the outcome of the referendum.
- The perception of betrayal by leaders across the political landscape, the development of different draft constitutions (mention the 6 drafts), persistent controversies about which one of the drafts is the bona fide document, the incessant reference to outstanding issues across the draft constitutions, now pose the latest challenge and drawback in the relentless effort of the Kenyan people to attain the goals of freedom, responsibility, and prosperity.
- *The Voices of Reason* calls for leaders to come together to deal with this new challenges and drawbacks. The sooner we can do this, the better! On the other hand, the more we delay in intervention, the more the crisis threatens to undo our previous gains and thwart the pursuit of higher goals within the broader sphere of democracy, human rights and accountability.

### **What remains to be done?**

*The Voices of Reason* offers hope for Kenyans to continue with their struggle for constitutional reform and democratization in a post-referendum era through a coalition of trusted, reform-minded leadership.

- Kenyans will agree with *The Voices of Reason* that the resurgence of rivalry among the political classes is only based on ethnic identity and share our optimism that this must be overcome because it is deviating us from our national higher ideals.
- Kenyans need to refocus their attention on the constitution, and refuse to be hoodwinked into complacency by extraneous factors that the referendum campaigns generated, especially tension and mistrust amongst various communities. This requires people to be sober and cool-headed if we are to safeguard our national values and secure a good future for this country. It is clear that we need each other for no group or community can realize its objectives of a secure future in isolation. Contrary to a lot of political propaganda so far witnessed, we can all subordinate our individual, group or community interests for the greater good of our motherland.
- The persistence of disagreements over the proposed Draft Constitution, which now tends to jeopardize the outcome of the referendum itself, is an indicator of the urgent need to restart the constitutional process. In trying to write a new constitution, that Kenyans yearned for so many years, we face the risk of ending up a prematurely concluded constitutional review process unless this measure is put in place.
- A constitutional reform process requires urgent rejuvenation to allow for the evolution of a constitutional draft that is more participatory, inclusive and widely accepted.
- Kenyans must now make the great leap forward which is: that irrespective of the outcome of the referendum we must once again, as we have done since in the past, come together from all our perceived political, social and personality enclaves that weakened us, and together we resolve our differences as one Kenya.

- Kenyans all are able to do this by summoning their will and energies to continue the struggle for the higher ideals and values that Kenyans desire. The Kenyan communities must not be allowed to be divided and to drift into narrow, personal, group, ethnic or regional differences.

*The Voices of Reason* calls upon Kenyans to initiate an inclusive consultation, dialogue, discussion and debate where everyone will have an equal voice and will be willing to give more than we receive. This is the only way the Kenyan voice of reason will prevail. This way, the rebirth of a new Kenya will be possible!

***Long Live the Voices of Reason!***

***Long Live Kenya!***

***Long Live Africa!***

## **THOUGHTS ARISING FROM ABOVE STATEMENT**

The threats to nationhood are many BUT should be ignored given the above...our democracy have been

Kenyans should be wary and remain on guard and don't give in to the betrayal of our leaders

Constitutional struggle should continue, all-inclusive negotiations and way forward for the sake of Kenya and Kenyans

- Kenya as a country after the referendum (Prophesy of doom...
- Referendum is just a process, but our Referendum was not structured well, should have been on the items we don't agree because those we agreed on should be aside from the (bad eggs,
- No implies that all is bad and Yes implies all is good, yet this is not true because after all, both camps agree that there is both good and bad in the Constitution...
- Ethnicity is being taken advantage
- Action will be implied, but will not be explicit...