

Kofi Annan encourages Côte d'Ivoire to step up efforts towards reconciliation

Despite progress, many challenges remain before 2015 elections

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Concluding a two-day visit to Abidjan, [Kofi Annan](#), Chair of The Elders and former UN Secretary-General, welcomed the progress accomplished by Côte d'Ivoire since the post-electoral crisis of 2010-2011. After having met a wide range of interlocutors, he also acknowledged that many challenges remained ahead of the 2015 elections.

Noting the rapid economic development and the substantial improvement of the security situation, Mr Annan said that he was "impressed by the dedication of President Ouattara and his government to bring the country back on track. I hope that everybody can enjoy the dividends of economic growth, especially young people who are struggling to find jobs."

Mr Annan encouraged Ivorians to step up their efforts towards reconciliation. He discussed this important issue with several stakeholders and was briefed by the Chair of the Commission on Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation. "We have heard disappointments," he said. "But reconciliation is a long-term process, not an event. For it to succeed, everyone must be committed. Both government and opposition should understand that compromises are necessary. The past can't be forgotten but I encourage my Ivorian sisters and brothers to work together and look forward to the future. They all have a responsibility to play their full part in building a genuinely cohesive and inclusive Côte d'Ivoire."

He added: "There is no doubt that plural societies can be challenging to govern. Appropriate laws and institutions are needed to manage differing needs and interests, and to protect the rights of each individual."

Stressing that reconciliation and justice are intertwined, Mr Annan acknowledged the challenges facing the justice system in Côte d'Ivoire after a decade of conflict and he encouraged the government to further strengthen it. "All those who have committed crimes against humanity must be brought to justice without fear or favour," he said. Mr Annan added that he was disturbed by the recent attempts by some African countries to portray the International Criminal Court as targeting Africa. "Our primary concern should be justice for the victims – the voiceless and the powerless," he said. "It is not Africa that is on trial at the ICC, but individuals and the culture of impunity."

Mr Annan urged all parties in Côte d'Ivoire to work towards peaceful elections in 2015. He said: "Preparations for those elections must begin immediately. Tomorrow begins today. The next elections must not become a trigger for a new conflict. Everyone should learn from past mistakes and ensure that the next elections are conducted with integrity."

Mr Annan also emphasised the need to tackle the root causes of conflict.

Mr Annan welcomed the strong efforts under way to accelerate the disarmament and reintegration of ex-combatants. He called on the international community to expand its support to this crucial step towards security and reconciliation.

It was Kofi Annan's third visit to Abidjan since he stepped down as UN Secretary-General. In [May 2011, he led a delegation of Elders](#), which also included Mary Robinson and Desmond Tutu, to encourage reconciliation and healing, after four months of post-election violence in which an estimated 3,000 people were killed and one million displaced. [He returned to Abidjan a few months later, in January 2012.](#)

During his visit on 9 and 10 October, Kofi Annan met President Alassane Ouattara; Guillaume Soro, President of the Assemblée Nationale; members of the government; former President Henri Konan Bédié; and several opposition members, including Pascal Affi N'Guessan, President of the Front Populaire Ivoirien. He also had meetings with Charles Konan Banny, President of the Commission on Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation; Aïchatou Mindaoudou, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General; as well as business leaders and civil society representatives.

Media inquiries

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About The Elders

The Elders are independent leaders using their collective experience and influence for peace, justice and human rights worldwide. The group was founded by Nelson Mandela in 2007.

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