



Remarks With Kenyan Prime Minister Raila A. Odinga Before Their Meeting

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Washington, DC
June 18, 2008

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(11:00 a.m. EDT)

SECRETARY RICE: I'd like to welcome the Prime Minister of Kenya, Prime Minister Odinga. It is very good to have you here. I believe that your election as prime minister shows that the Kenyan people have come through difficult times, but it was really the strength of Kenyan democracy, Kenyan civil society, and the will of Kenya's leaders to resolve the crisis that brings us to this moment. I am looking forward to an update on how you're doing on the reforms that have been agreed. But Kenya has a good friend in the United States, and the United States believes that it has a good friend in Kenya. So, welcome.

PRIME MINISTER ODINGA: Thank you so much, Condi. I'm very happy to be back here in Washington, this time as Prime Minister. I said yesterday, we are very grateful to the U.S. for the support that we received in our hour of need during the crisis. You personally came to Nairobi and I want to confirm here that your personal role in this process made it possible for us to achieve the understanding. This role played also by the UN, by the European Union, and other friends of Kenya.

As you know, peace has returned back to Kenya. We have come here to say that Kenya is up and moving again; we are ready for business. That's why we are actively appealing to the friends of Kenya to come back. We are appealing to the business to come and invest in Kenya, tourists to come back to Kenya, because it is now safe again. And we want the world to see that we want to move this forward. This is an experiment (inaudible) the first time in Africa. It's a pioneering exercise, but we want to show that it can work. And that's why the team are coming here. It's a mixed team, both sides of the coalition with me here and the Minister for Defense, and also the Minister for Transport and Assistant Minister for Trade. So I'm very happy to be in D.C. again.

SECRETARY RICE: Well, you and the President did a fine job to get Kenya back on the road again, and welcome, Raila. Good to have you here.

PRIME MINISTER ODINGA: Thank you. I am bringing a gift (inaudible) basket to the people of America.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you.

PRIME MINISTER ODINGA: Thank you.

QUESTION: What would you like President Mbeki to say to Mugabe when they meet later today?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, we're very concerned about the crisis in Zimbabwe. We're concerned for the people of Zimbabwe. We're concerned for the people of the region, because obviously the refugee flow, the violence that has been a part of this crisis. We're very concerned about the elections and we're trying to support the efforts of regional organizations to ensure free and fair elections, but it's very difficult when you have the kind of intimidation that is going on now in Zimbabwe. And so I think that it is time for the leaders of Africa to say to President Mugabe that the people of Zimbabwe deserve a free and fair election, that you cannot intimidate opponents, you cannot put opponents in jail, you cannot threaten them with charges of treason, and be respected in the international community. And I think that's a strong message, and I hope it'll be delivered. Thank you very much.

QUESTION: Minister Odinga, would you like to comment on Zimbabwe?

PRIME MINISTER ODINGA: Yes. First, I really want to thank Condi for those comments that – about Zimbabwe. As I have said myself, is that Zimbabwe remains an eyesore on the African continent. It is a big embarrassment that a leader can say on the eve of an election that he's not willing to hand over power to an opponent, and he can only hand over power to a member of his own political party. I think this is an embarrassment to Africa because it makes a sham of the presidential elections. You cannot have free and fair elections when opponents are being beaten up, when the Secretary General of the party, opposition party, is in detention, and very flimsy charges, possibly to be charged with treason.

So my view is that the time has come for the international community to act on Zimbabwe, the way that it did in Bosnia. I do not think that we are going to get free and fair elections in Zimbabwe. And what we need in Zimbabwe is (inaudible) an international peacekeeping force so that eventually proper elections can be held.

SECRETARY RICE: By the way, we will have a roundtable tomorrow at the United Nations Security Council. I'm going to co-chair that roundtable with the Foreign Minister of Burkina Faso, which is, of course, on the Security Council at this time. And perhaps we will be able to bring some international attention. This is, from our point of view, a matter for the Security Council of the United Nations to deal with.

Thank you.
2008/503

Released on June 18, 2008

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