

SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY HON. MWAI KIBAKI, C.G.H., M.P., PRESIDENT AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA DURING THE NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYERS, KENYATTA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTRE, NAIROBI, 8TH FEBRUARY, 2008

Fellow Kenyans,

It gives me great pleasure to join you all for this National Prayer to seek God's intervention in the recent events in our country through prayer and repentance, reconciliation and healing.

First of all, I would like to thank the Inter-Religious Forum for organizing and coordinating this important event bringing together all faiths and religious organizations to pray for our country. Secondly, I would like to commend Kenyans of all faiths for joining in this initiative. Prayer is a powerful tool of national reconciliation. God promises to listen to our prayers. He will forgive our failings, heal and restore our land when we ask for these through prayer. As we observe this day, therefore, I urge all Kenyans to go before God in full faith and trust that He will answer our prayers.

In the last **one** month, we have witnessed unprecedented violence that has brought death, pain, destruction and distress to so many of our people. Our prayers will bring healing to our country, and help those who suffered injury or lost their loved ones in the violence to find comfort and peace of mind. Above all, let us pray and commit ourselves, as individuals and as a nation, to do all that is needed to ensure that peace prevails in our country. In particular, I call upon all Christians to commit, in word and deed, to obey the second most important commandment in the bible, that is, "**love your neighbour as yourself**".

I believe that this law is appropriate for all humanity because it helps us to overcome the dangerous spirit of ethnic intolerance and hate that has led to mindless violence that we have witnessed in our country. I ask each one of us to turn and look at the person next to you. Are we not the same people? Indeed, language difference is simply a product of circumstance. I therefore urge all Kenyans to ignore their superficial differences, forgive one another and live together peacefully.

Fellow Kenyans,

The violence that rocked parts of our country after the elections is of great concern to me. For this reason, my Government has pledged to fully address its root causes. As part of this commitment, my Government is dedicated to engaging in dialogue that will lead to an amicable solution to the immediate as well as the underlying causes of the problems we are facing. In this regard, I wish to note that I am encouraged by the commendable progress that the national dialogue and reconciliation process being spearheaded by their Excellencies, **Kofi Annan, Benjamin Mkapa** and **Graca Machel** is making towards a mutually agreeable settlement. I reiterate my personal support and that of my entire Government to this process and urge all Kenyans to uphold the culture of peaceful settlement of disputes.

Beyond the process of dialogue, my Government has also stepped up measures to protect the lives of all Kenyans. I must warn those who mastermind or engage in acts of violence that they will pay for their criminal activities.

The security agencies are under strict instructions to take firm action against the perpetrators of acts of violence. Nevertheless, let me point out that while the rule of law will ensure peace and justice for all Kenyans, it is only through prayer and forgiveness that we can bring about enduring reconciliation and unity in our country. Indeed, neither the rule of law, nor a political agreement,

can by itself change the hearts or feelings of suspicion, fear, mistrust or hostility towards those you may consider to be different. **I**, therefore, appeal to all Kenyans to dedicate themselves to promoting national healing and reconciliation through prayers and forgiveness.

I call upon religious organizations, civil society, political leaders and other stakeholders to spearhead this initiative by bringing our citizens and communities together through prayer gatherings and other events aimed at promoting mutual forgiveness, reconciliation and unity. **I** also urge Kenyans to reflect seriously on today's scripture readings. These teachings should encourage all of us not to harbour hatred or engage in acts of vengeance. **I**nstead, let us all demonstrate a spirit of untiring willingness to forgive.

In conclusion, I urge Kenyans to continue praying for healing and for the strength to serve and encourage one another in hope and faith. **W**ith prayers, I am confident we will weather this storm of national tragedy and personal loss.

Indeed, I am confident that in due time we will find healing and recovery; remain a strong and united nation and reclaim our noble reputation not only of a nation at peace with itself but also a peace maker.

Thank you and God bless you all.