

Côte d’Ivoire: One year on, The Elders call for more decisive steps towards reconciliation

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

One year since their [visit](#) to Côte d’Ivoire, The Elders are heartened to find the country is on the road to recovery – but stress the need for more decisive progress towards reconciliation. They advise that reconciliation will not be able to take place while a perception of impunity for some is not addressed, and until thorough reform of the security sector is under way.

The Elders acknowledge the progress made by President Ouattara since he was sworn in office almost a year ago. After years of conflict, the overall security situation has improved, particularly in Abidjan, and the economy is showing promising signs.

The Elders particularly commend President Ouattara’s public commitment to justice and accountability, reiterated during his recent visit to the western part of the country which suffered some of the worst violence.

They were further encouraged by the decision by Charles Konan Banny, Chairman of the Commission for Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation to create 36 local reconciliation commissions across the country – which creates the potential for local participation. However, they worry that no concrete steps have since been taken as to the scope and effectiveness of these bodies.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Chair of The Elders, said:

“An inclusive reconciliation process could transform the climate in Cote d’Ivoire, for the best and forever – I cannot stress this enough.

“And in my experience, there always needs to be a strong mandate given to those at the grassroots. Civil society could be a fertile soil for dialogue and reconciliation, particularly if women’s rights groups are given pride of place in the process.”

The Elders acknowledge the challenges to reconciliation posed by ongoing insecurity issues which continue to exacerbate divisions among Ivorians. As such, they call upon President Ouattara and his government to accelerate reform of the security sector, regardless of the obstacles involved.

The Elders also urge the authorities to commit to building a fair and equitable judicial system.

Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said:

“Without independent courts and a fair and speedy judicial system, Ivorians may lose faith in the ability of their government to defend their interests impartially.

“When we were in Abidjan in May 2011, we repeatedly warned that a perception of ‘victor’s justice’ would seriously undermine the reconciliation process. A trusted judicial system will be key to lasting peace in Côte d’Ivoire.”

The Elders’ previous work on Côte d’Ivoire

In May 2011, members of The Elders travelled to Côte d’Ivoire 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. During their visit, they met President Ouattara and former President Laurent Gbagbo, then under house arrest in the North of the country, as well as members of civil society.

Read more at: <http://www.theelders.org/cote-divoire>

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.

The Elders are [Martti Ahtisaari](#), [Ela Bhatt](#), [Lakhdar Brahimi](#), [Gro Brundtland](#), [Fernando Henrique Cardoso](#), [Jimmy Carter](#), [Graça Machel](#), [Mary Robinson](#) and [Desmond Tutu](#) (Chair).

[Nelson Mandela](#) is an honorary Elder.

For biographies of the Elders, blogs, photos, videos and more information about their work please go to www.theElders.org.

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