



**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AND DIASPORA AFFAIRS**

**BRIEFING NOTES**

**TO THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS ON DEMONSTRATIONS IN KENYA**

**BY**

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**WEDNESDAY, 19<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2023**

***Your Excellency the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps,  
Your Excellencies High Commissioners and Ambassadors,  
Heads of Missions,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,***

1. Thank you for responding to my invitation and availing yourself for this briefing session touching on various facets of our country.
2. From the very outset I would like to thank many of our international partners who are represented here today. Since the assumption of office of the Government of H.E. William Ruto you have walked with us, you have encouraged and supported us and proven to be true partners.
3. Many of your countries are Kenya's leading trading partners. You are the large sources of tourists who visit our country. Many Kenyans have come to your countries to visit, study or live. Indeed today hundreds of thousands of Kenyans are happy to call your countries their second homes.
4. The majority of Kenyans see themselves as global citizens fully aware that we live in an interconnected world. We all cherish peace that we see as the cornerstone of economic and social development. We salute members of the international community who have supported Kenya's quest to promote peace and security in our region. As a country we are proud of the role we have played in planting and watering the seed of peace and democracy in several countries.

5. We undertake these many projects because we have also sought to be a country that is at peace with itself. Democracy that is manifested through free and fair elections is one of the key pillars of peace.
6. Last August Kenyans, on their free will, trooped to the polling stations and elected a Government of their choice. Subsequent judicial processes as set out in our constitution upheld the people's choice. The respect that many of your countries have for Kenya is to a large extent due to the transparent elections we held and the very smooth transition that was exhibited at Kasarani Stadium when former President Uhuru Kenyatta willingly and procedurally handed over the instruments of power to His Excellency President William Samoei Ruto.
7. In the last ten months ago, H.E. the President Ruto has engaged the international community on an array of mutually beneficial partnerships. I dare to say that this goodwill that you, our international partners, have exhibited has not gone down well among our worthy competitors of the last elections. There are those, having refused to accept political defeat have now turned to what amounts to acts of economic sabotage in the name of street protests.
8. You are all aware of the many factors at play that have caused an inflationary spiral in many countries around the world. Nations that have never witnessed surging inflation now find themselves near the double-digit territory. In simple terms I am saying high cost of food is not as localised as some people would like the average Kenyan to believe.

### **Violent Protests:**

9. While President Ruto has the full political mandate of the people of Kenya he agreed to the opening of a window of inter-parliamentary discussions to address some of the challenges that our country faces.

10. In March this year, the opposition Azimio One Kenya Alliance called for public demonstrations (*maandamano*) against Government. It was clear then as it is now, that these demonstrations were geared towards advancing a political agenda. Whereas the conveners indicated that the demonstrations will be peaceful, the contrary has been the case. These violent demonstrators have seen innocent members of the public attacked, private property looted and destroyed, police officers on duty to ensure law and order injured.
11. Women and school going children have been greatly affected while the economy has taken a big beating. Most regrettably a number of Kenyans have lost their lives.
12. The Government in its effort to stem the violence and halt the damage to the economy that the demonstrations were causing, and in response to appeals by various stakeholders including the business community and religious leaders agreed to hold bi-partisan talks with the opposition alliance. Subsequently, the Bi-partisan Talks Committee was formed under the co-chairmanship of the Government and the opposition, with equal representation. The Committee then commenced its work based on the agreed Terms of Reference.
13. Regrettably, on 24<sup>th</sup> May, representatives of the opposition walked away leaving the talks in abeyance. The Government Representatives remain seized and ready to conclude their agenda.
14. Subsequent to this, the opposition Alliance in July, 2023, once again called for public demonstrations ostensibly to protest against the passage of the Finance Act 2023 and high cost of living.
15. It is worth noting that the Finance Bill, was extensively debated in the National Assembly. Further that the draft bill was subjected to extensive public participation as per the requirement of the constitution. Furthermore, on the basis of the submissions by Members of the public, amendments were made to the draft bill before it was re-submitted and approved in accordance with the parliamentary standing orders.

16. The issue of high cost of living is a global challenge and stems from a combination of many factors including Covid-19, the Russia-Ukraine war and the attendant disruptions of the global supply chains, rising prices of oil and essential commodities and the negative effects of climate change. As a member of the international community, Kenya is not immune to these global challenges.
17. Our appeal to you is that we must remain truthful to ourselves even as you make your comments on the status of our country. Do not fall prey to propaganda. A case in point is a statement last week by the Spokesperson of the Office of the United Nations Human Rights (OHCHR) in Geneva alleging the death of 23 people. This statement was not only inaccurate, but misleading and appeared to have been written in support of a propaganda campaign by people opposed to the democratic will of the people. The speed at which an such an international organization that is meant to thoroughly verify information published the false information, led to only one conclusion- that the statement was premeditated.
18. We are a very open Government that listens to the people and other partners. As members of the Diplomatic corps, it is advisable that you adhere to internationally set precedents while commenting on issues of your country of accreditation.
19. Kenya's democracy is well entrenched. Unfortunately, we have political players who have never accepted any outcome of the many elections that they have taken part in. President William Ruto is hard at work with a plan to grow the economy. This is not an overnight journey with all the many challenges he inherited. What I can confidently say is that the President will not be distracted but will stay the path of moving Kenya forward. His only desire is to move millions of Kenyans from the bottom of the economic pyramid to a place where they can afford to feed their families, have shelter over their heads, have access to affordable healthcare and employment opportunities for the Nation's youth.

20. The solution will never come from violent protests but through imaginative solutions. We invite you to be active partners in this journey to reform Kenya

21. **In conclusion,** I want to assure you of our commitment to uphold the rule of law, protect human rights, and maintain peace and security.

22. We welcome constructive dialogue and engagement but also ask for respect for our political independence and adherence to international norms governing diplomatic relations.

23. We believe in a Kenya where peace prevails, where democratic processes are respected, and where the rule of law guides us. We are committed to working with all stakeholders, including our international partners, to realize this vision.

24. Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to our continued cooperation.

**AHSATENI-SHUKRAN**