

The Elders to visit Côte d'Ivoire to encourage healing and national reconciliation

Kofi Annan, Desmond Tutu and Mary Robinson to visit Abidjan 1-2 May

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Three members of The Elders will travel to Abidjan this weekend to encourage healing and dialogue on national reconciliation. The Elders' delegation will be led by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. He will be joined by Chair of The Elders, Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa, and former President of Ireland Mary Robinson.

The Elders will meet President Alassane Ouattara, representatives of the new government, leaders of political parties, and members of civil society organisations, as well as representatives of UN and other organisations and the diplomatic community in Abidjan.

Kofi Annan said: "Although a political handover has finally taken place and the election results implemented, the situation is still fragile. Ivoirians have suffered terribly as a result of the conflict. Many are still afraid to return to their homes. There is only one Côte d'Ivoire and the leaders and the people must understand that. The cloak of government must cover all. Ivoirians have no option but to reconcile, heal and live together."

Desmond Tutu said: "Our hearts go out to the people of Côte d'Ivoire. We hope that by meeting and listening to the people and their leaders we can help to encourage a process of healing. Ivoirians will have to find their own way to do this, and it will take time. Finding a way to reconciliation requires patience and courage, but I am hopeful that the country and its people will find a way forward together. In South Africa we learned the value of such a process, and we hope that Côte d'Ivoire will deliver safety to all its people, regardless of their origins."

Mary Robinson said: "It is particularly important that women are heard in this process and that they have a place at the table at all levels of government and society. Successful nations draw on the talents of all their citizens: men and women, diverse ethnicities, a range of skills and knowledge. I urge the people of Côte d'Ivoire to embrace their diversity as the first important step to reconciliation."

PRESS CONFERENCE ALERT

The Elders will hold a press conference in Abidjan during their visit. Date and time are to be confirmed. To receive updates please send your contact details to media@theElders.org.

ABOUT THE ELDERS

The Elders is an independent group of global leaders, brought together by Nelson Mandela in 2007, who work together for peace and human rights.

The Elders are Martti Ahtisaari, Kofi Annan, Ela Bhatt, Lakhdar Brahimi, Gro Brundtland, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Jimmy Carter, Graça Machel, Mary Robinson and Desmond Tutu (Chair). Nelson Mandela and Aung San Suu Kyi are honorary Elders.

Media contact: media@theElders.org

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

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