

## The AU Panel of Eminent African Personalities

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In January 2008, the African Union mandated the Panel of Eminent African Personalities, chaired by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, to mediate in the crisis following Kenya's contested 2007 elections. On 1 February 2008, the Kenyan government and the opposition Orange Democratic Movement embarked on a process of talks entitled "The Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation" (KNDR). In mid-February, they agreed to form a coalition government. In March, they agreed to set up a commission of inquiry into the post-electoral violence, a Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission, and an Independent Review Committee to look into the conduct of the elections themselves.

While the mediation phase of the KNDR was declared complete in July 2008, implementing the agreements remained a significant challenge. The Panel, and especially Kofi Annan, continued to engage in Kenyan politics. To support its work, a Coordination and Liaison Office (CLO) was mandated "to assist in the implementation of the agreements reached by the National Dialogue and to support the Coalition Government as it seeks to address the root causes of the 2007 post-election crisis." The CLO replaced a larger team of officials set up in Nairobi to serve the Panel in early 2008.

While the CLO provides support to the Coalition – running, for example, a government project to archive the KNDR's work – the Panel hired an independent firm, South Consulting, to report on progress on the peace accord. South, with a grant from the Open Society Institute, has published quarterly monitoring reports since January 2009.

CLO does not maintain a high profile – its head, an experienced diplomat, has the relatively functional title "Chief of Staff" – but Kofi Annan and other Panel members have kept up pressure on all parties to avoid a return to violence. On more than one occasion, Annan criticized Kenyan leaders for acting in ways that could unravel the peace deal. Nonetheless, Kenya passed an important milestone when voters approved a new constitution in an August 2010 referendum, limiting the president's powers.

The CLO is an unusual political mission, providing technical services to both the Panel and the government, while working under the overall aegis of the AU. As such, it provides an interesting model for field-based support to drawn-out mediation processes.