

**DIASPORA DEMAND FOR REPRESENTATION & REGISTRATION TO VOTE: A PRESS
STATEMENT (22ND AUGUST 2011)**

The Group of Forty-Seven (G-47) and the Diaspora Alliance were formed to contribute to the efforts towards **a just, free, prosperous, united and equitable Kenya**. We believe that Kenya is blessed with a citizenry (both at home and abroad) whose desires include rebuilding Kenya based on socio-economic justice, rule of law, peace and equity.

As a result, we, like all other citizens' groupings yearning for change in Kenya, were reasonably satisfied with the passing of the constitution, which provided for, among other things, registration to vote and representation in Parliament and other decision-making bodies, for the over 3 million Kenyans living outside the country. Indeed, this was a step long overdue, as Diaspora Kenyans constitute a large political and economic constituency, which until now has not been represented in any of the country's decision-making apparatus. This is even more disturbing when one realizes that the Diaspora community contributes over US\$ 1 billion (over Kshs 90 billion) annually in direct remittances to the economy of Kenya, making it no doubt the most important foreign exchange earner in the country. In fact in 2010, official World Bank and Central Bank of Kenya (CBK) reports indicate that the Diaspora remitted about US\$ 1.8 billion (or KShs 150 billion at last year's exchange rates) into the national economy.

It is therefore concerning to the Diaspora community at large that, even though the constitution makes it clear that it is our right to participate in decision-making processes and be represented just like all other Kenyans, there appear to be no plans in place to actualize this right. Indeed, we are particularly disturbed to learn that the two major political parties in the governing coalition are actively engaged with each other in attempting to block or adversely delay the enactment of the relevant laws and statutes that would actualize Diaspora registration and representation.

Concerned at what appears to be deliberate exclusion of Diaspora in matters of strategic, national importance, last year some of our members went to court to demand registration of Diaspora to participate in the land-mark referendum vote. While acknowledging that the time left at the time for the vote was not enough to register the Diaspora, the Court directed appropriate arms of government, especially the Interim Independent Electoral Commission (IIEC) to ensure that Kenyans outside the country vote in ALL future referenda and national elections.

The G-47, the Diaspora Alliance and their various member organizations will not accept this denial of our right to vote and be represented. The Diaspora community has as important a stake in the country as all other citizens, and has the right to be heard at all decision-making levels in all arms of the State and government.

We urge the two parties in the Governing Coalition, as well as all Kenyans of goodwill, to facilitate actualization of the right of Kenyans abroad to be represented and to vote for their leaders. Indeed, going by the constitutional provisions recognizing equality of the vote, we expect that in delimiting the 80 new constituencies, that five (5) shall be reserved for Diaspora candidates, each per continent as you find Kenyans literally in every corner of the globe. This way alone can the large constituency of voters living outside the country be represented and feel connected with our Kenyan brothers and sisters at home.

With today's available online and electronic voting (e-voting) and e-participation technologies, it is no longer impractical for Diaspora to participate in elections, and also to have Diaspora legislators as already happening in Sierra Leone, South Africa, Iraq, Cameroun, India, and Philippines, among others.

We believe that it is not late to make the required changes to the political set-up in Kenya in order to actualize the rights of Diaspora Kenyans to be represented, and to select their leaders freely in accordance with the constitution of the Republic.

Signed by Mr. Peter Wanyonyi (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia)

Ag. Chief Spokesperson

For and on behalf of the G-47, the Diaspora Alliance and the Constituent Member Organizations

[Chief Spokesperson for G-47/Diaspora Alliance, Dr Aukot Ekuru, is presently 'on-leave' for a national assignment. Contacts presently in Nairobi: Peter Wanyonyi 0727-018927, pwanyonyi@gmail.com or Flora Terah 0722-266280, floterah@yahoo.com]

ABOUT THE G-47 – WHO WE ARE, WHAT, WHY?

The G-47 is a grouping Kenyans of integrity and distinguished standing in society, who believe that a “*Better Kenya4All*” is possible in our lifetime, and are actively working towards its realization. It is a diverse group, representing the true face of Kenya in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, age, etc, targeting all the 47 counties and the Diaspora (G47+1). The membership is made up of progressive minds within and without the private sector, academia, politics, clergy, labour movement, civil society, and grass-root role-models known within community circles and with distinguished career or leadership trails. They are pro-change members, free from tribal alliances and establishment political parties.

Organisation and mobilisation for the G-47 started as part of the Kenyan Diaspora Alliance (see below). We considered that Kenya is a “Sleeping Giant”. Not only do

we want our country to be well governed in the style of the many countries where we work from, but that we are a significant contributor to the national economy and with a voting strength of over 2 million (out of the 3 million plus Diaspora), hence a force not to be ignored. In partnership with fellow countrymen and women in the homeland, we can truly bring about desired change in Kenya regardless of tribe and regional, political affiliations. The G-47 provides the basis for, among other things, identifying and installing alternative leadership from among the people of Kenya through the ballot vide civic education.

ABOUT THE DIASPORA ALLIANCE

The Alliance is an umbrella grouping of most of the major Kenya Diaspora organizations, representing over 80% of Diaspora who belong to such organized global groups. Its membership is to be found in literally every continent and country of the world.

There are presently more than 3 million Kenyans in the Diaspora, together remitting into the Kenyan economy over KSh 150 billion every year. This is a significant portion of the GDP and national budget, being the singular highest foreign exchange earner, way ahead of tourism, horticulture, and other mainstay of our economy. The new constitution reiterates the Kenyan-ness of the Diaspora, even those who have acquired dual citizenships. It upholds the supremacy and right of every Kenyan (including the Diaspora) to vote and participate in all matters of national importance, including policy, legislation, governance and leadership. The Diaspora Alliance (whose member organizations are listed below) continue to seek to integrate and mainstream the Diaspora in the national psyche and economy, and champion their rights and interests, alongside the wider national common good.

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS OF THE DIASPORA ALLIANCE

1. Diaspora Movement of Kenya (DMK)
2. Kenyans for Change (K4C)
3. Kenya Community Abroad (KCA)
4. Kenyan Diaspora Pro-democracy Movement [KDPM]
5. Kenya Global Unity (KGU)
6. Kenya Movement for Democracy & Justice [KMDJ]
7. New Vision Kenya (NVK-Mageuzi)
8. Madaraka Movement
9. Plus several national associations, movements and caucuses