



## African Leader Series

Moderator:

**Rød-Larsen, President, International Peace Institute**

Speaker:

**H.E. Ouattara, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire**

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**Terje Rød-Larsen:**

Mr. President, Ministers, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends, good afternoon. It is indeed a great pleasure to welcome President Alassane Ouattara, the President of Côte d'Ivoire as our guest speaker in the *African Leaders Series*. We are truly honored to have you with us this afternoon, following your address to the General Assembly, and we congratulate you on your recent assumption to the presidency of your country.

Our discussion today is a continuation of our African Leader Series, which has previously featured other prominent leaders, including President Wade, Kagame, and Bongo to meet with members of the U.N. community in this informal setting. The International Peace Institute's Africa Program, which is our longest continuous program, going back to 1993, seeks to assist African leaders and civil society in order to manage and resolve conflicts. And it is in this spirit, I welcome you here today.

As we are all aware, Côte d'Ivoire has gone through a decisive political change under, to say the least, very difficult circumstances in the past year. In the preceding decades, the leaders of Côte d'Ivoire have played major roles in bringing peace to Liberia, Sierra Leon and more broadly to the West African region. In the last decade however, politics in Côte d'Ivoire fractured. After a contentious electoral campaign and extensive violence, President Ouattara was declared the winner of the November 2010 presidential election. This outcome was endorsed by the United Nations and the entire international community.

It was only in April 2011, however, that Laurent Gbagbo was compelled by the United Nations and French forces to step down. President Ouattara was confirmed the winner by the constitutional court in May of

this year, and has now assumed his, if I may say so, rightful place as president of his country. The topic of today's event, "Rebuilding Côte d'Ivoire, The Way Forward", underscores the tremendous hope, as well as the major challenges that you face, Mr. President.

Rebuilding Côte d'Ivoire's political and economic institutions is of great importance not only for your country, but for the entire West African subregion, and the continent as a whole.

President Ouattara brings to these challenges not only his political and moral commitment to rebuilding Côte d'Ivoire, but a distinguished national and international career, which makes him, I'd say, eminently qualified to meet them. President Ouattara obtained a Doctorate in Economics from the University of Pennsylvania. He subsequently worked for the International Monetary Fund, which combined with his work for the Central Bank of West African States in Paris and in Dakar, counted for his 20 years of international and regional services.

In Côte d'Ivoire, President Ouattara was first appointed president of the Inter-ministerial Committee for Coordination of the Stabilization Program and Economic Recovery. He was then appointed by then President Felix Houphouët-Boigny, appointed Prime Minister, and had a government position he occupied from November 1990 to December 1993. Indeed, overcoming divisions and restoring the social cohesion in Côte d'Ivoire is a big challenge. The establishment of the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission is an important first step.

President Ouattara, we recognize in you a man of patience, of courage, determination, and with a demonstrated ability to find solutions to the most difficult challenges ahead. We look forward to hearing your views on how best to move Côte d'Ivoire from a decade of conflict into a new era of post-conflict reconstruction. President Ouattara will now give a brief presentation that addresses these challenges, followed by a conversation with you, the audience.

But before I give you the floor, Mr. President, one administrative note: We have interpretation here today, and you will find devices on your chairs. Channel One is English. I repeat, Channel One is English. Channel Three is French. I also want to remind you that this meeting is on the record, and that we are webcasting this event live. Thank you very much. You have the floor, Mr. President.

**Alassane Ouattara:**

Thank you, President Larsen, and thank you for this opportunity to give you recent political, economic and social development in Côte d'Ivoire. I think since we've consumed about 20 minutes eating very good Ivorian food you gave us with a lot of pepper, so that's why you can see I'm not getting red, I'm getting green, because of too much pepper I ate. But I'd like to say that probably it's better for me to tell you what are the main challenges we are facing now, most of I see on the list.

You know all the developments in Côte d'Ivoire, how things went with the election, the post-electoral crisis, the war in Abidjan, how Gbagbo left and how I took the oath of office early May, and then the inauguration in May. The government was formed on the first of June. So in effect, our government is only four months old.

We have set ourselves objectives concerning the immediate period. First was securitization, to make sure that we have peace returned to Abidjan and to the remaining parts of the country. It was easier in the remaining part of the country. Abidjan was quite difficult because at the height of the battle in Abidjan, it's about 30,000 young people who decided without any experience or training to fight against the militia and mercenaries brought in by Gbagbo. He had nearly 50,000 mercenaries, so it was quite difficult. Too many people died during this period. We finally, after several weeks, were able to pacify Abidjan. Many of the mercenaries left. The militias moved on to the western part of the country. Some crossed over, including the mercenaries, to Liberia. So we still have a bit of this problem, with problems in the western part of the country.

Some of the military officials and former governmental officials moved to Ghana on the eastern front. Many have returned, but basically the two countries, Ghana and Liberia, are cooperating very well. So clearly the people there know that they cannot escape trials, and that at some stage, they should return home. In fact, I'm going to visit Ghana early October, and I was in Liberia a month ago. So both the two countries are doing everything to support our efforts to get peace, and also to get the rule of law, to make sure that people who return will face trial if they should.

And on that count, I can assure you that there won't be two types of treatment. Everyone will be treated equally. This has had dramatic humanitarian consequences, since at one point, one million people were displaced internally or refugees in neighboring countries.

Now on the second chapter, the military front of security, we've been able to merge with two armies—the army which comes from the north, and the regular army—by making appointments where both armies will be represented at the top echelon. So if the Chief of Staff is from northern army, the Deputy is from the other side. This was true for not only the military, air force, marine, paramilitary, police and so forth. So that has worked well. And now the deployment and integration has been taken down to cover nearly all the level of responsibility in the army, from the unit of 25 persons to the battalion of 900 persons.

We're working on a Security Sector Reform on our own, with the support of the U.N. There again, we believe that things clearly will be handled properly. So the humanitarian cost was very heavy, and there the U.N. has helped us substantially, and we continue to ask for their help. Institutions were set up very early. The Constitutional Court came in from Ghana with the help of President Atta Mills for the ceremony of my swearing in. We've set up members of the Supreme Courts who are appointed, of the Economic and Social Council, and so on, various institutions. There again, we try to make sure that all the different parts of the country are represented. So, most of the political affiliations also are represented.

Now, the main issue that we're addressing—reconciliation. I think reconciliation starts with the need for the leaders to really have a language of reconciliation. The problem is that with President Gbagbo, he had a language of hatred, of division, and this was taken over by his party, by state television. So now we clearly have a different language, a positive language, and I can see that this has been adopted all along the

line, including in the villages. The chief of small villages of 200, 300 persons make gatherings among the different elements of the community to say that we have to reconcile, we have to live together again in peace. So this is quite encouraging. And the Commission for Truth and Reconciliation, which we have named in Côte d'Ivoire, Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation, the members have been appointed. There again, we have made sure that we have all the different areas of the country represented (north, south, east, west, center), the main religions (Muslims, Christians). Also the traditional chiefs and kings are represented. The gender issue—so four out of 11 are women. So, I think it's a balanced commission, and we're going to proceed with their swearing in on September 28<sup>th</sup>, Yamoussoukro, in less than a week there.

I was telling my brother, President Zuma, this morning that reconciliation is well supported if there is economic progress, improvement in the conditions of people. So we have to make rapid progress on the economic front. On the social front, and for that I've set up an emergency program—in fact, in March when I was in the Golf Hotel—of \$100 million dollars to really get water, electricity, free medicine to the poorest, repairing plants and so forth, cleaning the city of Abidjan, cleaning the major cities, removing all these problems of difficulty. So I think is quite well appreciated by the population, but also by investors, because when they come now to Abidjan, they see Abidjan is a clean city. In less than six months, we have made that achievement, and I'd like to really pay tribute to the lady who is in charge of this project. She's doing an excellent job.

On the economic front, I was telling Chairman President Larsen earlier that the GDP would drop by five to 10 percent in 2011 because of the earlier situation. During the first quarter of the year, as you're aware, the ports were—there was a blockade against Côte d'Ivoire. The ports were closed, the banks were closed, people couldn't go to work, and so forth. Security was at its height. So the IMF is now estimating the decline in GDP at five percent this year, but next year, there will be a rebound. They have an estimate of eight to nine percent positive growth, which shows how much our efforts, our policies, and investments are helping. Normally after that, we should clearly buoy above six to seven percent growth, according to the IMF.

But my ambition is to have double-digit growth by 2014, 2015. And I think it's possible, given the potential of Côte d'Ivoire, you know, where we first produce our cocoa, 1.5 million ton this year. We produce oil. Not much, but 30,000 to 40,000 barrels per day. We have a lot of gas which will come into production. Produce rubber, and so forth. So, we want to be self sufficient in rice production in three years.

So, we have big projects. We have hydroelectric plants, which will require an investment of half a billion dollars, and so forth. I hope a highway project between Yamoussoukro and Ouagadougou to be financed by some of the Arab funds for nearly two billion dollars. So, with all these investments, I'm confident that normally, and special and also the measures we'll be implementing to get a better environment for business, cleaning the judicial system, tackling governance issues, eliminating racket and so forth. So, all these should contribute to having a much higher growth than what is projected by the IMF.

So, on the diplomatic front, we're determined to reinforce the place of Côte d'Ivoire. Côte d'Ivoire, as you recall, 20 years ago was a major peacemaker in the region. We were always present when there was a problem between Mali and Burkina, Liberia and many places. So we lost that capacity. We have resumed that, and we have visited already, I think, four countries in the subregion—Senegal, Burkina, Nigeria. I'm going to Ghana early October, then to Mali, the second half of October, and then to Benin and Togo, and so forth. We have invitation for state visits in France, in Morocco, in Lebanon, in Israel and so forth. So it shows how the country is moving.

We feel that West Africa can be a major driving force for Africa, to give coherence to the policies of the African Union, because Nigeria has 150 million people, and the rest of West Africa is 150 million. So it's a region of 300 million people. So, with a close leadership by Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire for that region, clearly there could be major improvement in the coherence of policies for the continent.

The U.S. has been extremely supportive. President Obama invited us here last July. Of course, he praises our progress in democracy and the rule of law. So I told him that has a cost, so we hope he'll give us a big check in a few months to reward us for this good job that he said we are doing. But in the Security Council, also on the ground in Abidjan, the U.S. ambassador was extremely engaged, along with the French and Nigerian ambassadors. They really did a remarkable job. So President, I think it's better I take questions rather than give a lecture. So, these are some of the main points I wanted to indicate. Thank you.

**Rød-Larsen:**

Thank you very much Mr. President. And thank you very much for a very comprehensive, and, in a nutshell, frank, expose of the economic, social, security and political challenges ahead. Particularly I appreciated listening to what you said about the process of reconciliation.

I would actually take the liberty of starting myself with a question before I open the floor, because we have had in this hall several discussions over the last few weeks and months actually, related to what has happened in Libya and Yemen, in Tunis and Egypt, in Syria, and elsewhere, where there is one question which pops up all the time. This is related to the use of force to pursue legitimate and just international norms. Here, these different countries have chosen different paths in order to do it. In Tunisia and in Egypt, it was peaceful demonstrations. In Libya, the people took to arms; in Yemen as well; Syria, maybe kind of in between. Example, you as the legitimate elected president of the country, found it necessary to use force, backed by ECOWAS, backed by the U.N., and backed by France. But you took that choice and you pursued it. This is related to those ethical issues as related to philosophical issues, tactical issues, strategic issues. Could you share with us your reflections on this very pertinent question of the day, Mr. President?

**Ouattara:**

So, I push here? Okay. Well, thank you, Mr. President. This is an important issue because I really believe in non-violence. I do not believe in force. I always believed in a democratic process and the rule of law, transparent elections, which is what we did. In fact, you may recall that Laurent Gbagbo postponed the election four or five times. So, elections

which were to be held in 2005, then were to be held in 2007, and then 2009, 2010, and finally, even in 2010, it was twice that it was postponed.

But my ally and myself, President Bédié of the PDCI, the Democratic Party, we thought that we should give it time because with our coalition, we were sure to win the elections. First, the election took place on November 28<sup>th</sup> in the evening. I called Gbagbo because we had the results quite early. I knew I had won. I think our tally was 57 to 43 percent, according to our first estimate. I couldn't reach him.

He called me the following night, on Monday, late in the evening. I said, "Well, Laurent, you're calling to congratulate me?" He said, "No, no, no, no, it's not over." I said, "Well, what do you mean it's not over? The figures are there." Then, after that of course, you know the result of his decision. And even when that happened, we waited for ECOWAS to get its position, and then unfortunately after ECOWAS got its position, including the use of force in the statement of ECOWAS, the African Union came in, which they should not have, but this was manipulated by countries which you all know. We really were not very happy with the African Union on this matter, but we thought that since our victory was clear, we should accept their verdict or their evaluation, as they called it, of the African Union.

That came in, in mid-March—I think 10<sup>th</sup> of March—and there again, Gbagbo did not accept to comply to the results of the evaluation of the African Union. So at that point, we decided well, we did not want ECOWAS intervention, because it could have been very heavy, and Gbagbo had started using heavy weapons in Abidjan, killing several hundred people. We believe that it was better to take time to get—we had nine delegations came to Abidjan to tell Gbagbo to leave. The message was always the same, "You've lost the elections, you should leave. What do you want President Ouattara to provide for your security?" and so forth. He always said, "No, no, I'll think about it, and we'll see", and then he continued to use violence and killing people. So at some point, we decided with the Prime Minister, who was head of the army of the new forces, to embark on trying to remove President Gbagbo.

After all, I had won the election democratically. He did not want to leave. Thus, in three days, the northern army was able to get to Abidjan. Then, we also, through the French ambassador and the Nigerians, even the South Africans, we sent messages to Gbagbo that it's better to avoid a bloody battle. At that point, the Chief of Staff resigned. He fled to the Angolan embassy. From his account afterwards, he told me he had told Gbagbo that they didn't want to fight, they wanted really to give up and let the implementation of the decision of the African Union. Again, Gbagbo did not want to listen to the army, but because he had militias and mercenaries, so that's how it developed. So really, we went into this, the use of force, against our philosophy, against our will. So really, Gbagbo is totally responsible for the fact that force was used. He had several opportunities to get a peaceful settlement. He did not accept to do it.

**Rød-Larsen:**

Thank you very much for those very clear words. May I now open the floor. Could you please state your name and your affiliation, and

remember we are webcast live. There is a hand over there. There are two hands over there.

**Abdul Rahman Jalew:**

Good afternoon, Mr. President. As we say back home, "Bon arrivé". I know it's been three days you're here, but still "Bon arrivé". My name is Abdul Rahman Jalew and I'm one of your countrymen, and I'm studying at Columbia University. My question pertains to the rule of Côte d'Ivoire in West Africa. Since you took office, there's been a series of meetings at the head of states and high military commandment level dedicated to address some of the consequences of the Ivorian crisis, namely the inflow of mercenaries and the circulation of small and light arm weapons that have a destabilizing effect for the subregion. So I think there's been like three of those meetings, and indeed, it demonstrates a new approach and the dawning of more preventive measures in a collaborative way to address some of those original threats.

Next to that, in May, during your trip in Dakar, President Wade, during the joint press conference, adverts the idea of greater political integration in West Africa, without outlining a plan unfortunately. So, through this prism of this military mobilization and this political will to advance towards more political integration, there's an opportunity for Côte d'Ivoire that is I think undoubtedly the original soft power. We've four sources of power, namely the power of attraction with five million of our brothers and sisters of West Africa who live in Côte d'Ivoire, Abidjan capital still twice as high of the original average, the historical mediation acumen in resolving political disputes, namely in Liberia and Angola, and also the strong links that the country holds, maintains with great power democratic countries, namely the United States and France. In view of those developments and with Côte d'Ivoire soft power attributes, what's your vision of the leadership role that Côte d'Ivoire should and must play to enforce peace and security in the region?

**Rød-Larsen:**

Thank you very much. May I then give the floor. I think we can take two, three questions within the time frame. There's a lady on the second row, on my left hand side. Okay, we can start there. Okay, you start.

**Omar Dsou:**

Thanks, Mr. President. My name is [PH] Omar Dsou and I'm from OCHA at the U.N. You were just saying that following your meeting with President Bush, you said that democracy had a cost.

**Ouattara:**

President Obama.

**Omar Dsou:**

Oh, President Obama, I'm sorry. I do believe that democracy is not just elections, but looking back, Côte d'Ivoire, years ago--I'm from next door, I know, like when we used to say Côte d'Ivoire, we used a lot from that country, especially when it comes to economic and social development. But looking back in Côte d'Ivoire over the past five years, and looking at the consequences of the political crises for last year, you've talked about the humanitarian impacts, do you think it's really worth it? Is the cost really worth it? This is not just for Côte d'Ivoire, maybe for Africa. Do you think that it's time really for Africans to look at other ways, less costly, that can better unite the people, and at the same time have leaders instead of, you know, starting from elections and then, you know, going to where we've been in Côte d'Ivoire and many other countries in Africa? Thank you.

**Rød-Larsen:**

Thank you very much. Then, the last question in this round.

**Julia Harrington Reddy:**

My name is Julia Harrington Reddy. I'm from the Open Society Justice Initiative, which is one of the Justice Initiative Family Foundations. My question is about citizenship, Mr. President. It could be said that one of the root causes of the conflict, even the original armed conflict, continuing up to this very year is the controversy over who within the Côte d'Ivoire really has the right to call themselves an Ivorian, and very specifically who has the right to hold documents proving themselves as Ivorian. We would love to know what is your view about how to best address this problem.

**Rød-Larsen:**

Thank you very much. We then turn the floor to you, Mr. President.

**Ouattara:**

On the first speaker, I understand it's a question of the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire, its consequences; and the second, part of the political integration. Now on the first part of your question, I think everything started really in Liberia, and then it spread over to the other countries—of course to Sierra Leon, to Guinea and then to Côte d'Ivoire. And we're back to Liberia again with the elections scheduled on October 11. It's clear that the mercenaries' people who started all this in Liberia went to various countries.

Now we've had transparent democratic elections in Sierra Leon and Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire, so they have been pushed out. They're back home, and they want to really develop the same situation as they did 20, 25 years ago. So, it's very important that these elections are transparent in Liberia, and that things are protected. That's why at ECOWAS with Nigeria, Nigeria and Ghana, Bukina and Senegal, we had a meeting about two weeks ago, and we decided to send the military—not military, but police force in ECOWAS, police force in Liberia to really support the electoral process, to make sure that first, it's peaceful, and secondly, that whoever wins will be given the victory. So basically, I believe that if the elections are successful in Liberia, peaceful because everything there will be transparent, this will be a big plus for the subregion--the fact that Sierra Leon has gotten over its crisis, Guinea also, and of course Côte d'Ivoire.

On the idea of political integration, we believe in political integration. We think we should go beyond monetary and economic integration. How to do this? At the level of the West African Economic and Monetary Union, we raised this issue, I think it was in June, and we have set up a panel to look at ways to recommend elements to us. With Nigeria also, I've had several discussions with President Jonathan, who is also very much engaged. We should find a formula to simplify things for the region. We're 15 countries, 300 million people. I think we can deliver more than we're doing now. Democracy has a cost, and is there an alternative? I'll say "no". Clearly my own experience is that democracy and freedom are linked, in a way. So they cannot be separated. So therefore, there is no way to avoid that.

I think we're having the experience with the Arab countries. Who could think a year ago that Tunisia, Egypt or Libya would have the young people asking for freedom. It's really, that's the basic. Because lack of freedom—freedom of expression, basic freedom of getting jobs, competition and so forth—this is what has led to all these changes. I

think we have crossed a big step in Africa, because if you look at the 15 countries--I had this discussion with a foreign minister--we are only one or two countries now out of the 15 where maybe one could question the process. Otherwise, can you imagine how this progress has been tremendous over the past five, 10 years? So I'm very happy I have engaged in this, because I told people, I came here in the U.S. I was 20 years old, and I came to the conclusion that the strength of this country was the respect of basic freedom and the respect of the institutions. So I went back home with a dream really, to give that to my country, and I'm happy now that I have this opportunity. We will do nothing to restrain basic freedoms in Côte d'Ivoire. Elections should be transparent. If I win, fine; if I lose, no problem. So this should be reinforced in the next five years, and in my leadership.

Now the question of citizenship, I think this has been a major problem in Côte d'Ivoire, but it's not really the fault of one politician. I think all the line, everyone contributed in a way to this problem. Clearly, we should get together now and make sure that this will not be a problem for the future.

For example, my children are born here, their birth certificate is a simple piece of paper. I think one was born in Philadelphia and the other one in Virginia. It's a piece of paper like this. That's all, and they have American citizenship. But in Côte d'Ivoire, you had a big piece of paper, some are green, some are yellow, some are pink.

And then there is a mention, which always shocks me, that if you have doubts on your citizenship on the certificate you're holding--this is telling the police and the administration, if you have any doubt, then you can recourse to the authorities to confirm the citizenship of someone. So that means you don't have a citizenship if a person can go and confirm or deny you your citizenship.

So that's why I'm saying it's not--and everyone kept this piece of paper. So one of the first things I'm going to do when we get the National Assembly--I don't want to do this from executive authority--but after the parliamentary election, we'll get back to reviewing the law on citizenship. I think we have to get a clear notion of what is an Ivorian citizen, and it's undoubtedly recognized, so that we will not get back to all these issues to know who is an Ivorian and who is not.

**Rød-Larsen:**

Thank you very much for a very interesting, to-the-point and I'd say stringent answers to the questions. So, we'll now take another round of questions. I see already one hand going up. Two hands. So if you could please provide these two gentlemen with a microphone.

**Stéphane Jean:**

Excellency, thank you very much for your presentation. You mentioned during this presentation the importance of the rule of law, both for establishing security in the country and for the economic and social development of Ivory Coast. By the way, my name is Stéphane Jean from the United Nations... Obviously, justice institutions--namely the police, the gendarmerie, the judiciary or, yet, the prisons--were negatively affected by both the recent conflict and the protracted crisis of the last decade. What is your vision in the short-, mid- and long-term for re-establishing and strengthening these institutions? Thank you.

**Rød-Larsen:**

Thank you very much. Then there is a gentleman at the back.

**Mr. Jeremie Labbe:**

Good afternoon, Jeremie Labbe from IPI. Mister President, I have a question on the relationship between reconciliation and justice in Ivory Coast. I would like to have your views on the link between the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that was recently put in place and the criminal justice system, in particular in relation to the most serious abuses committed during the conflict. I would be grateful if you could develop on this particular issue. Thank you.

**Rød-Larsen:**

We'll take a third last question in this round.

**Ms. Monique Clesca:**

Thank you. My name is Monique Clesca and I work with the United Nations. Excellency, you talked confidently about the economic development of Ivory Coast, and you even stated that in your views the economic growth might display a double digit, beyond the projections of the International Monetary Fund. I'd like to know whether you have a similar positive vision for the political future of Ivory Coast. Notably, do you have the same confidence that what recently happened in Ivory Coast, this deep wound, will never happen again, including on the issue of nationality that, as you mentioned, you intend to solve through the Parliament? Thank you.

**Rød-Larsen:**

Thank you very much. I think I will then give you the floor again, Mr. President, and then we'll have the last round.

**Ouattara:**

Well, thank you, Mr. President. The question on the rule of law and new prospects, I think it's clear that when you've had a situation when the law has been manipulated in every sector, both in the judicial but in the administration itself, in the military, at the highest level, so it's not easy to do that. I agree with you.

But it also depends on the determination we should show, and the trust we have in our institutions. You see, I could have done like President Gbagbo and appoint under Constitutional Court someone close to me or to my philosophical or political ideas. But I appointed as the head of the Constitutional Court—that's the highest court, in fact, in Côte d'Ivoire, to interpret the Constitution—I took someone who is known as a socialist. I'm a liberal. He was an ally of Gbagbo some years ago. He participated in the government of President Bédié, my ally.

But the main thing is he's known as someone very independent. He's our first constitutional lawyer. So, he's a man who is independent. When I appointed him, I said, "Well, look, it's because you are respected, independent and competent that I'm appointing you. So, you have the responsibility of making sure that this country returns to really the right application of the law." Because the crisis went from the constitutional courts, the Constitutional Court knew the results. Now the former was so scared to go to jail, that when I saw him head to head, face to face, he told me, "Look, we knew the results, but we were afraid of being killed." So, it's clear, I will not kill the current Constitutional Court for any reason. So again, the leadership is important, and I believe that once people start seeing that the judges can render decisions which are believed to be the right ones in perception, in substance, this will help. I hope that, in fact, we'll be able to catch a few judges who are corrupt, and fire them through the process, to give trust to people that we don't want to get

back to a corrupt judiciary system. On your question of reconciliation and justice, a bit linked to that, see, in our view, the process you have through the reconciliation commission on the one side, but you have also the judicial process on the other. I don't want to mix the two, because clearly people have committed things which have to be looked at by the judges. If the judges decide to send someone in prison, every person will go to prison.

The only exception I've made so far, it's former President Gbagbo and his wife, because they were on trial for economic crime because of the corruption. They took money from the Central Bank. They even took trucks. They removed nearly half a billion dollars from the Central Bank in one quarter. So, clearly I could have said, "Let them go to prison", but out of consideration and dignity for their person and their rank, I accepted that they should be in a villa, taken care of in their security situation.

So, now the Commission has two years to really listen to everyone—victims and others—and they'll come with a recommendation, and at that point, we'll decide. If these are light things, probably, and the recommendation that should be pardoned, we'll do that. But anyway, killing people could be pardoned in my view. But that's my view up to now because we'll have a process at looking at this in government, of course. Now on the question about the vision and how we can prevent what happened to come back again, yes, well, I think it depends on all of us Ivorians. We should really accept that all Ivorians are equal Ivorians. That has been the basic problem in Côte d'Ivoire, that people, in a way, thought that we are different categories of Ivorian. This was not good. It was not fair, and this created frustrations and problems and so forth. The lack of transparency in the electoral process also added to that; and finally, the manipulation of the judges and the judicial system.

Personally, you can be assured that for me, there won't be different categories of Ivorian. I tell people that I'm in such a comfortable position because I'm a Muslim, my wife is Catholic, some of my children are Protestants, some others are Catholic or Muslims. I clearly have no intention of interfering with the law. I think my record is there. When I was Prime Minister, everyone agreed that the judicial had worked better. Especially, every time I will have an opportunity to speak to our compatriots, I will call for tolerance and for reconciliation. So, what is said by the leader of the country is very important. Before, we were hearing messages of hate, of division. Certainly, no one will hear that from me. So, we should, each one of us, do everything we can, because this should not have happened in Côte d'Ivoire really, but that's the life of nations. I pledge, for my part, that I'll do everything to avoid these errors of the past.

**Rød-Larsen:**

Thank you once again for answering so frankly and with such clarity. If there are any questions, we can take them now. We are getting very close to the timeframe we have set, but if there is one more question, I will allow for it. There isn't. Then I have a question. Human rights organizations have reported and documented extensive and serious crimes committed by both forces--to your opponent, but also to forces loyal to you in the post-election violence. My question is, what are your thoughts about that, particularly concerning forces loyal to you, and what are you going to do about it?

**Ouattara:**

As I said, we'll not have different categories of citizens, of treatment of people and so forth. What we have decided to do is to set up a national commission of inquiry. You're talking especially on the things which happened in the western part of the country, and in one of the districts of Abidjan called Yopougon where there were battles. These areas, heavy weapons were used and people were killed, and at the end of the war, there was attempt at revenge by some, so who killed others and so forth. So, it's clear that there were killings on both sides.

But a commission of inquiry should be able to tell us why this happened, when, and who did what. On that basis, obviously, a trial should start, and no matter which side people are, they should go to trial and there should be sanctions. That, I have no problem with that now. What we have told the human rights organizations—Amnesty, Human Rights Watch & so forth—is that when they have information, they should give us to us. It helps us, in fact, in evaluating the sincerity of what happened, because we also have information. If we were satisfied with them, I would have not have set up a human rights commission, a national enquiry commission.

But they should not think that because they listen to one side, that that is the truth. I'm not saying that they're lies, but at least let's find out exactly what happened, and once we know what happened, then the due process should start. We want the rule of law, and the rule of law means equal treatment for all citizens in whatever act they oppose.

**Rød-Larsen:**

Thank you very much. What is left for me then is to thank you; and I'd like to say I think that everyone in this room, including myself, feel pride for being here with a man of such tremendous courage, of such principle, and of such as we've heard today, and such frankness. I think you have everybody here with you, personally, and also your country. And I think everybody here feels that we'd all like to do what we can in order to assist you in that path towards the future of your country. And then I will simply say—and I think I'm talking on behalf of everybody—good luck to you, and to your country. Thank you very much.