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KENYA 2002 ELECTIONS

## COMMENTARY

The last month has seen unprecedented dissent within the ruling party as President Moi's vocal support for Uhuru Kenyatta as KANU presidential nominee has prompted a public succession battle within the party and caused the fall of Vice-President of the Republic, Hon. George Saitoti.

The main opposition umbrella party, the National Alliance Party of Kenya (NAK), despite gaining in popularity over its rival alliance, the People's Coalition, has been heavily criticized for not mounting a press campaign to profit from KANU's disarray. As NAK continues to delay in the announcement of its presidential candidate and some of its key members have defected to other parties, many observers wonder if the party will be able to maintain unity.

### KANU's Presidential Nominations

In an increasingly heated battle of insults, recriminations and cabinet reshuffles, KANU has publicly divided itself into supporters of Project Uhuru (Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta's campaign) and supporters of the Rainbow Alliance (any of the other 4 KANU contenders for presidential nominee).

The President's backing is solidly behind Hon. Kenyatta, the son of Kenya's founding President the late Mzee Jomo Kenyatta. The four other KANU candidates (Hon. Raila Odinga, Hon. Kalonzo Musyoka, Hon. Musalia Mudavadi and Vice-President Hon. George Saitoti), vigorously opposed both to Hon. Kenyatta and to the President's open support for him, have since grouped to form the **Rainbow Alliance**.

Members of the alliance have demanded that candidate elections be done through secret ballot, a deviation from the March 18 KANU-NDP merger meeting where KANU national officials were elected by acclamation. While President Moi has concurred that "KANU members will decide" through elections, there is concern about the transparency of the party nomination process, especially as a

number of senior party officials, including the Director of Elections Hon William Ruto, have publicly announced that Kenyatta already has the party's vote.

The biggest complaint against Hon. Kenyatta is his perceived lack of political experience. Hon. Kenyatta has never won an elective office (after losing the 1997 parliamentary elections, he was nominated to parliament a year ago and promoted to Minister shortly thereafter) and is largely viewed as the President's creation. In addition, many within and out of KANU resent President's Moi's assertion that he "knows which leader is best for the nation".

In the most spectacular indication that President Moi is willing to use his office to discredit all other contenders, Moi sacked VP George Saitoti on August 30<sup>th</sup>. This proceeded the dismissal of former KANU secretary general Hon. Joseph Kamotho, and Hon. Fred Gumo from their cabinet posts. In perhaps another warning to the Rainbow Alliance that dissent will

not be tolerated, Minister Julius Sunkuli, a hardline supporter of Moi and Kenyatta,

has publicly threatened Minister Odinga with a takeover of his office.

### **Opposition Alliances: NAK and KPC**

The opposition's National Alliance for Change has transformed itself into the National Alliance Party of Kenya. This has been widely viewed as an indication that the NAK has taken a critical step to resolving its internal disputes re the sharing of power among parties. However, the most contentious issue (and possibly deal breaker) of determining the presidential candidate remains. In the meantime, one of NAK's biggest financiers and most prestigious supporters, Hon. Njenga Karume has since defected to Uhuru's camp. Karume's assertion that he wants to be on the winning side is a big blow to Kibaki, whose Democratic Party has relied heavily on Karume's support over the years.

The NAK's rules dictate that for any presidential hopeful to be considered for nomination, they must first seek nomination from their party of origin. Top contenders for the seat will be the 'Big 3' i.e. Hon. Kibaki, Hon. Wamalwa and Hon.

Ngilu. As an indication that the continued delay in leadership selection is weakening the party, popular MP Hon. Donde of FORD-K declared his desire to be nominated. While he was disqualified for lack of party nomination, his departure may foretell further defections from NAK.

The Alliance has since unsuccessfully tried to woo veteran politician Mr. Kenneth Matiba who has a measure of grassroots support in Central Province.

Second opposition alliance, the Kenya People's Coalition (KPC), composed of Hon. Simeon Nyachae's Ford-People, and Safina, has the advantage of an already determined presidential candidate and is considered to have significant support in Nyanza province. However, despite polls show that show flagbearer Hon. Nyachae in 3<sup>rd</sup> place as presidential contender, Nyachae has declared that he will not join any other coalition.

### **Presidential Opinion Poll Results**

In a recent opinion poll funded by USAID, KANU presidential candidates emerged victorious in 7 out of the 10 published scenarios (ranking candidates). Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta was KANU's leading preferred candidate followed by Hon. Raila Odinga. Opposition leaders, Hon. Mwai Kibaki and Hon. Wamalwa Kijana emerged victorious only when they were paired with lesser known KANU candidates. However, in almost all scenarios the sum total of votes for Nyachae and any of the NAK Big 3 beat KANU's score. Parties have been quick to discredit poll results rather than adapting their strategies to combat perceived weaknesses.

### **The Constitutional Review**

Parliament has granted the Constitution Review Committee an extension until January 2003 to present the final agreed-upon Constitution. In the last week, the High Court has ruled that the CKRC must cease its drafting until a lawsuit is settled (brought by a private law firm) that alleges the CKRC has breached its own regulations. As the CKRC has widespread political (with the exception of President Moi) and public support, many observers speculate that Moi has encouraged the suit to prevent the CKRC from complying with its deadline.