

December 14, 2009

*Speaking notes for meeting with party leaders/Steering Committee*

(Introductory words on how the programme was triggered, its continuation, the August 2008 Protocol and working groups etc. Reference to Frank Nabwisos Some Suggestions..., August 26, 2009; previously handed over to Sida)

Work on your joint platform for the 2011 elections continues and it is of great interest to us to note if it focuses on improvement in life and opportunities for the people of Uganda. The great majority of voters are women and young people. We hope that you will be successful in promotion of their priorities and interests, also in order to secure victory in the elections. It is exciting for us from Sweden to have the opportunity to listen in on how you wish to promote democratic development in Uganda. Do you intend to see to it that the Domestic Relations Bill goes through? Do you wish to engage young people in the dialogue to create an attractive and relevant election platform?. Do you wish to combat the ~~NRM~~ initiative to brand homosexuality as a crime? I think that any form of discrimination of groups or individuals based on sex, age, religion, status, ethnicity, beliefs, goes against principles of democratic development, human rights and the striving for governance. And it would give Europeans in general, as your supporters, a set-back. (In passing, let me mention that a strongly catholic country like Spain has now by law accepted marriage between homosexuals).

You have skilfully launched, in Parliament, five amendment bills, relating to elections. This was done, I understand, in July this year, and you took care to brief donors about these important initiatives. You will no doubt continue to push for these amendments, necessary for a more just election process, and its results.

However, it is unfortunately realistic to expect that there will be strong, and maybe successful, attempts to manipulate the election process, and its results. Neighbouring Kenya was a bad example.

You may therefore want to look, already now, at options to try to secure a correct implementation. You are surely already be doing a lot, so maybe we are just pushing at doors already ajar. Before I offer a few proposals, in all humility, let me just repeat a hope that the Democratic Party will join your ranks, thus preventing a possibility that you as the present opposition will lose the elections because of a vote split. The Swedish Christian Democratic Party, whom I represent here, is a smaller partner of the Swedish Alliance. I understand we have quite a lot in common with the Democratic Party of Uganda. We did not hesitate to join the Swedish alliance in its preparatory work during the years 2004-2006. By joining the alliance, we could have our priorities well measured in the common election platform. Naturally, certain compromises had to be made, by all parties of the Swedish Alliance. In such negotiations, there is always a give and take. The end result, however, has been ability to implement many of our priorities.

You have already informed the donors about your positions and the reform bills in particular. I would like to think that it is important that donors strongly advocate that they simply will not tolerate a repetition of the last Kenyan election. Donors should hold those manipulating election results fully responsible, and for violence that may follow as a direct result of manipulation. You need, basically, to tackle an unfortunate and not completely uncommon donor attitude in favour of "business as usual".

The United States, and the European Union, probably have particularly strong roles in applying appropriate pressure in favour of fair elections. Could one expect the new Obama administration to be stern in respect of manipulation, and less concerned with the role of the present executive in Uganda as a provider of certain regional military security inputs – if such inputs still are there ?

A second consideration is this one. In any dialogue between yourselves and the present government party, promoted by Dutch NIMD and/or other actors, your previous proposal on a very specific agenda could be promoted. I recall in particular one very constructive point that ran roughly as follows: “what can be done to assure a loser of elections an honourable exit, and full security?”.

This particular point brings to my mind, just as an illustration, the interesting facility provided by the Presidential Archives of Boston University for outgoing African Presidents, to have a year of an elevated lecturer and writer position. I have been there to meet such a former President, and he had reason to be very satisfied, and could share his rich experience with the world.

Thirdly, going back to elections, I like to think that there are important roles to be played by organisations such as IDEA and EISA – I recall EISA had a representative here in August 2008 – to engage themselves before, during and after elections. As for IDEA, your best contact point is with the IDEA Program for Africa and the Middle East, AMEP, in Pretoria, headed by Ambassador Mustaq Moorad. If you seek to engage IDEA, you would want to clearly define what you expect them to do, in order to maximize outcome of their no doubt limited resources.

What could be the role of other actors, say parliamentarians such as AWEPA, for instance?. Can they be inspired to network with you before, during and after elections? I take this opportunity to refer to an Appeal for joint efforts by all actors, made by the former leader of the Swedish Christian Democratic Party, Mr Alf Svensson, now member of the European Parliament, and others. I have copies of that appeal here.

Fourthly, fighting corruption is likely to be an important point in any serious election platform. At a recent workshop convened by the Swedish Minister for International Development Cooperation, Mrs Gunilla Carlsson, we learnt as follows. It is necessary to fully unveil the corrupt practices of a dishonest elite. Analyze the power structures. Create well-functioning institutions for fighting corruption, including active stances by the press and common people/consumers.

Soji Apampa of the Convention on Business Integrity, in Nigeria of all places, has created an SMS, mail, voice, data reporting system of apparently imposing effects in revealing corrupt agencies and power structures. (His description is available, I think, on the web) I also learnt of the Anti-Corruption Coalition of Uganda and its 20-district public expenditure tracking in respect of water programmes. Can you form alliances with such anti-corruption systems? Uganda with its good access to mobile communication systems does and can apparently do a lot.

Fifthly, we think it is now time to engage strongly women and youth for the 2011 elections, and to have them fully support, become engaged and benefit from an Alliance election

platform. At the same time, these the most important strata of society, should be engaged in a dialogue between the Alliance, and the NRM, to promote a more peaceful and understanding attitude in Uganda. KIC and its partners are prepared to endeavour to assist in such an engagement at the grass-roots level. There were plans from our side also to engage in a more central dialogue between the top echolons of parties in Uganda, but we understand Dutch NIMD is now taking on this task, ~~and does not favour having KIC and its other Swedish partners in that venture.~~

But, and this is an important but. Any dialogue attempted between opposing partners should avoid concentrating too much on elections in particular. It is my understanding, based on our experience from all-party seminars at provincial level in Kenya in the early 2000s, that the best strategy for generating understanding, mutual respect and a more listening attitude between all parties, is to look for issues where there is an ability to seek common ground, in the interest of all Ugandans.

Now, more about the future. KIC and its other Swedish partners, the Swedish Alliance PAOs, have found extremely rewarding the relationship and results achieved in our attempts to support the Ugandan Alliance. Your performance has in many ways exceeded our expectations, You have utilized your common liaison and think tank CIL very well. You have shown considerable courage and determination. Important new partners, the PPP and.....have joined, or are about to join. There will be/has been, a Second Protocol signed by Presidents of Parties. But, as I indicated before, big challenges lie ahead, including, as I indicated, that hands are joined with the Democratic Party, still outside the Alliance, in order to avoid split votes in the 2011 election.

Let me end these humble observations by assuring you of continued support of Party-Affiliated Organizations of the Swedish Alliance. Our support to the IPA will continue. As things stand now, we repeat that we may have a particularly useful role in engaging women and youth at the provincial level, from all parties including the NRM, in dialogue to increase understanding and lessen the risk of conflict, all in the interest to the common Ugandan.

Let me finally quote from a letter from the Swedish Prime Minister, Mr Fredrik Reinfeldt, when I briefed him on our activities in Uganda: “..I am glad to hear that your work in Uganda is going in the right direction. Establishment of democracy should never be under-rated”.