



BEYOND THE HEADLINES

Featuring

Michela Wrong

Author of

It's Our Turn to Eat: The Story of a Kenyan Whistle-Blower

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Warren Hoge:

Good evening and welcome. I'm Warren Hoge, IPI's Vice President and Director of External Relations, and I'm pleased to welcome you here tonight to this "Beyond the Headlines" event devoted to the book *It's Our Turn to Eat: The Story of a Kenyan Whistle-Blower*, and to its author, Michela Wrong.

Now a couple of housekeeping points at the outset, please cut off cell phones or anything that murmurs or trembles. Secondly, we have a brand new brochure about IPI. You should have found one on your seat, and those who don't have seats, you will find them on the credenzas on the side, and you will also find, on your seat and on the credenzas, a flyer about a September event here featuring Ade Adebajo, head of the Centre for Conflict Resolution in Cape Town, and his new book, which has the provocative and alluring title of *From Global Apartheid to Global Village: Africa and the United Nations*. So I hope we'll see you all back here then.

Michela Wrong, our speaker tonight, has established herself as a trusted observer of Africa, having written two well-received books about the continent, one about Eritrea, the other about the Democratic Republic of Congo. Both of them are noted on your invitation. Her new book has received very favorable notice, from among others, The New York Times, whose recent Sunday Book Review review we also provided a link to on the invitation.

Although booksellers in Kenya are wary of stocking her book, I can report that it is on sale at the door here. It also has become the most pirated book in Kenya's history, with bootleg PDF files being passed around, and, according to one of our IPI associates who is now in Kenya, under- the- counter copies can be had for the asking. Now we've had a little bit of a mix-up in the back here, some books

that were supposed to have arrived have not arrived. But happily, a HarperCollins representative came here and kindly agreed to return to HarperCollins to bring a whole bunch of books here. Michela, I'm sure, would be very happy to sign those books for you.

Michela is, as the Guardian has called her, "an exceptionally talented writer," and *It's Our Turn to Eat* is a well-paced narrative full of context and knowing detail portraying the life and actions of an extraordinary Kenyan named John Githongo with some deep convictions about his country's failings, its needs, and how he could do something about it. Michela's achievement is to make that life story into one that illustrates larger truths affecting Kenya and many other African nations and throwing into dramatic relief the ongoing debate about whether to condition aid on good governance.

Kenya is a country which has always possessed a significance beyond its size and its population, a country whose toes and fros are closely watched by outsiders for clues about which direction the continent itself is taking. Also, Kenya's position as East Africa's dominant economy, its history as a capitalist ally, and its military agreements have encouraged thinking in the West that a certain amount of abuse was tolerable in the name of *realpolitik*.

Michela's book begins in January 2003 when a new President, Mwai Kibaki, came to power riding the promise of reform under the rousing banner of the National Rainbow Coalition. In apparent furtherance of that promise, he appointed John Githongo, then heading up the local branch of the anti-graft organization, Transparency International, as his anti-corruption czar.

Githongo enjoyed his new government's support as long as he probed the corruption of the previous regime of Daniel arap Moi, who had been in office for 24 years, but when he began to pursue evidence that the new government he served may have, in fact, started perpetuating the scandalous behavior of its predecessor, rather than curbing it, he ran into serious problems. Michela supplies fascinating details of how he kept himself informed, and in a positively heart-stopping passage, tells how his decision to secretly tape the admissions of his colleagues almost backfired.

How did the government react to his discovery? Two years into his job, he had to flee Kenya for his life. Michela learned this personally when, on February 6, 2005, there was a knock on the door of her London flat, and she found John Githongo standing there, taking her up on a years' old promise of a bolt hole if he ever got in trouble and needed a place to hide.

From exile, Githongo was able to continue his campaign, releasing information and tape transcripts that chronicled how key ministers and top civil servants had conspired to steal up to \$750 million in public funds, and, as described in a part of the book that will have particular resonance in Western capitals and here at the UN, the aid money kept flowing, no questions asked, from the World Bank and from major donor nations, with one exception. And since I see that country's deputy permanent representative in the audience, I will single it out. As Michela writes, "The Netherlands, was the only bilateral donor to announce it was actually freezing aid over corruption concerns."

As for the UN, in May 2007, just as all this scandal was becoming public, the UN awarded Kenya its annual public service award for, and I quote, "improving transparency, accountability, and responsiveness in the public sector."

In January 2008, a dangerous ethno-nationalism long in existence, but concealed by Kenya's reputation as the exceptional African state, erupted, leading to the tribal violence that shocked the world and left more than a thousand dead in the aftermath of the December 2007 elections. Michela offers evidence that, had the Kibaki government lived up to its promises or acted on John Githongo's findings, maybe that violence would not have occurred.

That violence has damaged Kenya, both at home and abroad, and its consequences for Kenya's future could be dire. After the post-election riots, a Kenyan newspaper publisher tells Michela: "The generation that harbored that kind of ethnic hatred was dying away. Our children didn't know about it, but they have understood it now, and it will take a long, long time to vanish."

So Michela, against that backdrop, we are very eager to hear you talk about the book, and could I start by asking you to explain the curious title you gave it and what that means?

Michela Wrong:

Thanks very much, thank you for introducing me, thank you for inviting me here, and it's a really interesting audience, it's got all sorts of reverberations from my past. My first boss is here, Patrick Worsnip; Tade Aina, who actually helped fund the book, made sure it came out in time, because he was the Ford Foundation's director in Nairobi; Clive Priddle is my first editor who edited my Congo books, so for me, it's very nice, because all these things come together, and I even have a member of my family here.

But anyway, you were asking about the phrase "It's our turn to eat," and sometimes that sounds like a curious phrase to people who are not African, but it is actually a very common phrase in Africa generally, but particularly in Kenya, and as any Africans in the room will know, it really is a reference to the idea that, once your tribesperson gets into power, if he's either the President, or he holds a key ministry, or he's got a key position in the government, your community, your tribe will benefit. You're going to get jobs for the boys, you're going to get funding in your local constituency, the roads are going to be repaired, the lights are going to be fixed, the water spigots are going to be put in, and your companies run by your people are going to get the contracts.

And this is really the way Kenya, and it's not alone in this, because essentially, of course, that's what the white people did in Kenya as well. And you've got a series of sort of ethnic elites -- I would say the white settlers, and then you've got the Kikuyus under Jomo Kenyatta, the first President, and then the Kalenjin under President Moi, and now under Mwai Kibaki, the Kikuyus again who regard running a country really as an opportunity for a sort of ethnic gorging, I would say, rather than a sort of meritocratic system where every citizen has an equal opportunity.

So you get a system of rule where it's a zero sum game, and if one tribe does well, everyone else loses out, and what I found very interesting about John Githongo and this episode in which he fled, came to my flat with all this information about this scam called Anglo Leasing, which was between \$750 million and \$1 billion worth of corrupt contracts that had been signed with ghost companies, ghost military companies, and ghost security companies, was that John didn't seem to share this vision of how you run a country.

John basically represented a generational clash between the people who are actually running Kenya, and I would say, are running many of the countries in Africa who do regard themselves as belonging to an ethnic community first and

citizens of their country second, and look back to the *shamba*, to the village, to the rural area from which they came, and then people like John who are very urban and have mixed with members of other ethnic communities all their lives, have dated members of other communities all their lives, married them, and regard themselves as being Kenyans first, and in John's case, a Kikuyu second.

And I think that's why I found this story so intriguing, because I think that generational clash is happening across Africa, and it's really where we're going to see change in Africa taking place. I call them the Sheng generation, because in Kenya's case, they speak this very interesting mix of Swahili and English, and it's a language that older Kenyans don't speak, and it's a sort of a melting pot, that language in itself is a melting pot, much as New York is a melting pot.

I think the story that I tell in this book is also an object lesson in how the "It's our turn to eat" philosophy is used as a camouflage, because under the guise of, "we're going to help the tribe, we're going to help our own ethnic community, we're going to take care of you, because you're part of the group," you get these really top level scandals taking place in which there's a lot of personal enrichment going on.

And what I think the lesson of my book, and Warren has already referred to it, is that the awareness of what's going on, the camouflage doesn't go very deep, and the awareness of what's going on, the personal enrichment, and the ethnic favoritism going on, eventually leads to such bitterness in a country which has the kind of poverty that Kenya now has, that it does push countries to the brink of civil war.

I think that is what we saw after the elections in Kenya where the conception amongst the non-Kikuyu ethnic tribes of Kenya was that the election was being stolen, and that they were going to be left forever in the cold because the Kikuyus were going to steal that election, and if you're left in the cold in Kenya, your life is very, very tough indeed. So you will go out on the streets, and you will take part in non-peaceful protests to stop that situation from happening, and I think that's a link that development officials tend to downplay, the link between corruption and ethnic favoritism, and corruption that takes that form, and the kind of insecurity and the violence and the instability that we saw in Kenya.

I think there are so many interesting questions raised by John's story, but just for this particular forum since we are in New York and in the UN, I'd just like to hone in on one particular issue, which is a question that concerned me towards the end of my book, which is: Did Kenya's Western partners, people -- the organizations like the World Bank and the IMF and its bilateral partners, the British government, the U.S. government -- did they help or hinder people like John, that Sheng generation, members of that Sheng generation who were trying to change things and change the system of government in Kenya. And the conclusion of my book is that they...they actually, you know, they come out of it looking very bad. The verdict's pretty damning, that at every step of the way, they adopted a "see no evil, hear no evil" approach towards corruption and didn't see that that form of corruption also had implications when it came to the stability of the country as a whole.

And I try and explore why that is. I think one of the reasons is, as we've seen, it's been very interesting watching Clinton, Hillary Clinton, going around Africa. She's extremely concerned with Somalia at the moment. And I think this is one of the reasons why the West has always tended to turn a blind eye to corruption under every regime in Kenya, because it's seen as this regional linchpin, this key state

that you have to get on with. The fact that the UN has headquarters there in Nairobi is also an element. And so we're seeing this situation where because the states are so worried about what's going on with Somalia and so keen to have one peaceful, stable country in the region, then they will sort of go through a lot of self-delusion just to keep in, you know, good terms with the government of the day in Kenya. So in a way, you're seeing a reproduction of the Cold War mentality that dictated policy in Africa.

That's not the only reason though, I think, for this strange blindness to corruption that we saw in John Githongo's case because repeatedly there were occasions where you would have thought people who would go to John Githongo saying: "Tell us all you know. You know about this scandal, you know about this 800 million dollars that went missing. Who is it? Where did it go? What are the implications?" And really the reaction to him was one of sheer indifference. Quite stunning, really.

I think the other issue – and I think this is something that's on the wane now – is that there has been this humanitarian imperative dictating relations with Africa. It's the Jeffrey Sachs school of thought, the Bono and Geldof vision of Africa, which sees it as being possible to do good in Africa apolitically, and also sees, as a sort of expression of this guilty Western conscience towards Africa, this post-colonial guilt complex and the attempt to make up for past sins.

I think Dambisa Moyo's book – many of you will have read it – *Dead Aid*, to my mind, it's not that that book said anything particularly startlingly new, but it marks the end of that era, it seems to me. And I think with the global recession and also the sense that the Jeffrey Sachs school of thought has sort of run out of ideological steam maybe. I think there's a turning of the tide on that way of approaching Africa.

But there are other more mundane issues why the West treats Africa in this way and treats the issue of corruption in this way. I think what you saw in Kenya is a very obvious example of Stockholm Syndrome, as I call it, and I gather that that's quite a well-known term in the development community. This phenomena where people live in a bubble, all the IMF officials, the World Bank directors, who live in Nairobi and hobnob with other ministers and live in very nice houses. I mean, in Kenya's case, we had this extraordinary situation where the World Bank country director was actually living in a house that was owned and rented out by the President of the day, and the World Bank didn't see anything wrong with that situation.

And it was only brought to public attention when Mwai Kibaki's wife threw a wobbly because the party that the departing country director threw was too loud and noisy, and so she stormed in to rip out the plugs from the wall. The fact that the World Bank didn't think that there was anything wrong with their director renting from the President of the day tells you a lot about this...the way in which international officials get captured and lose their critical distance with the governments that they're supposed to be having a sort of relationship of constructive tension with, I would say, and that certainly didn't happen in Kenya's case.

I think the results are that you also get this three-year syndrome, where officials go out there, the first year they want to approve every project going, the second year they begin to understand why their predecessor didn't approve anything, and by the third year they've decided they'll never approve a project again, but by that stage they're about to leave. And so their replacement then does exactly the

same thing, so you have this very short...you have no institutional memory and people just go round and round and round.

Journalists go through the same loop, and ambassadors go through the same loop. And it's a very costly loop. And it basically favors the government of the day if it's a government that is busy filling its pockets. And I think the result is you get this syndrome where you get development officials who fall in love with official figures that don't actually betray that much about what's going on in the country. So in Kenya's case, we had 6% growth rates under Mwai Kibaki, and everyone thought that was absolutely wonderful and they would keep quoting these to you when they talked about Kenya and the Kibaki government, and it was a great excuse for ignoring the corruption and ignoring the Anglo Leasing case. And they kept talking about direction of travel and how it was going...how it was going...the direction of travel was up. And in the process they managed to drive past the biggest and most squalid slums in Africa and simply never notice them. And they also managed to miss the phenomena that was increasingly obvious to journalists, which was the growth of this toxic ethnic hostility growing up.

So I'll just wind up now because I'm sure people would prefer to ask questions than me to spout on. I have a few messages I suppose to the international community. I was actually very intrigued and pleased to see Hillary Clinton being very tough on the Kenyans when she went out there. She ruffled a lot of feathers, and I sort of felt she might have actually read my book before she went out there. [laughter].

Maybe I'm fooling myself. But America, in particular, at the moment, thanks to Obama's birthplace and his Kenyan father, has huge, huge influence in Kenya, potential influence. A lot of Kenyans who are terribly disillusioned with their own government look to Obama and they think this is the leader we should have had, we could have had, we would like to have. So when Obama and his administration say something, it has a huge impact. I mean, this is an administration that enjoys an influence on Africa and Kenya in particular that no other American President has ever enjoyed.

I was very pleased to see that there were heavy hints dropped about visa bans, asset freezes by Hillary Clinton when she was over there. Humiliation is a very powerful weapon, and it's often underestimated. For a Kenyan newspaper to come out and say that so-and-so can't travel to London and go to Harrods and do his shopping or he can't go to Bloomingdales is actually a really potent tool. And there's the whole issue of, maybe his children are also attending – you know they go to the best universities here, they go to the best universities in my country – so these things do pack a punch.

One of the things I'd like to see that international community look at is I would like to see it looking at how on earth there are ever going to be elections in Kenya again given that you had these really, really horrible violent ones, and everyone knows how to rig elections. And the story in Kenya now is one of ethnic militias that are being armed by politicians sitting in Nairobi. So I think you need to have an international police force, preferably not a white...not a one with white faces, but an African one, making sure that there can be future elections in that country. It's a really problematical issue.

I would also like to see a reexamination of this trend that we've seen in Africa where the international community pays for, encourages the setting up of anti-corruption units, anti-corruption bodies, the kind of units that John Githongo headed. There was this idea that this was going to be the silver bullet because

the police could not be trusted, the judiciary was corrupt, and these people were going to deal with the corruption issue.

It's proved to be...I think it's a busted flush now. These notions...this idea just doesn't work. They tend...these people try and do, you know, as good a job as they can. They end up being threatened, they end up in exile. Nuhu Ribadu, who's the Nigerian equivalent of John, is now in Oxford in exile. He had an assassination attempt against him. He fled.

And what you see elsewhere is that the judiciary works to undermine these units. It's always found that they don't have the right powers to do what they want to do, and so the whole thing just falls apart, and I think, you know, this stuff just doesn't work. And we've got to go back. If we're Western donors, we want to engage with Africa. You've got to go back to the old traditional thing of like supporting the police, supporting the judiciary, putting technocrats into the judicial system.

So I've talked a lot about Kenya tonight. I'd just like to make the point that whenever I write my books -- this is the third one -- I do try and focus on a microcosm, but I always assume that that has relevant lessons for other African countries. And I do think that's the case with this one. And one of the nicest things has been seeing this book discussed, debated and reviewed on the websites from Ghana to Gambia to Zambia to South Africa to Sudan, almost as though I wasn't writing about Kenya. People are regarding it as though it's a critique of Zambian politics, or Nigerian politics.

I think, you know, the issues in this book -- ethnic favoritism, ethnic tension, the whole clash of generational values -- I think they apply to so many African countries. Not all of them, but a lot of them. And so I hope, I mean I'm getting a very good feeling, that it's being read around Africa, and I hope that will continue to be the case. So thank you very much.

Warren Hoge: That's great. And that was hardly spouting on. We would be quite happy to have you continue talking. I'm going to ask Michela a couple of questions myself and then throw it open to the floor.

Michela Wrong: I'm sure I'll continue to spout on now.

Warren Hoge: [laughs] But let me just ask you a few things that came up. One of them is about John Githongo himself whom you capture so well in the book. I mean if you read this book, you come to know this man. I want to ask you two questions. One is: I think he is back in Kenya now, isn't he?

Michela Wrong: That's right, yes.

Warren Hoge: I wanted to ask you, what is that about? What is he doing? How was he received? And the other thing I wanted to ask you about, you...I don't want to quote back to you what you write here, but you have a passage about the transformation of John Githongo where you talk about how his aspirations ended up stretching way beyond Kenya and how he hoped to push the global industry into recognizing that his chirpy determination to look on the bright side was all over. Tell us about John Githongo now. How has he changed? What is he doing in Kenya?

Michela Wrong: Well he...he is back in Kenya. He went back permanently. He'd actually been coming and going very quietly without people realizing. He had a big return in

August. And then after this big return in August where all the cameras were there, John was going back very quietly and then he transferred to Kenya permanently in February. I think he's, ...it's a decision and a move that is not without risks, and I think he has taken those on board and he's extremely careful and he does, you know, he has security guards.

He made a lot of enemies in Kenya. There are people who adore him and think he's a saint and talk about him as the next President, but there are plenty of people, particularly in his own ethnic elite, that upper class of Kikuyus, who absolutely hate his guts. And I quite often meet these people and you know: "snitch, spy, washing our dirty laundry abroad." These are the words that they use and, you know, he should think again if he thinks he's ever going to stand again for politics in this country. There's a huge bitterness in that group towards him.

And it's quite interesting because that group, when you talk to them, will never engage with the fact of did John reveal stuff that was untrue. They just don't like the fact that he revealed it. They'll never say, "John told a pack of lies." They never say that. They say he's a snitch, i.e. what he said was completely true: there was a group of ministers who came from our ethnic community who were setting out to steal 800 million dollars. We acknowledge that. We don't doubt his word on that at all, but he shouldn't have told anyone about it. And he certainly shouldn't have gone and said it abroad. You keep that in the community. So it's a very...you know, it's a sort of that feeling of keep it in the family. And he'll always have to deal with those people, and they will always hate him. So it's a problem for him, definitely.

Warren Hoge: One reason he said it abroad, as you point out in the book, is his own newspaper in Kenya would not publish details of his conclusion, so he had the Daily Telegraph...

Michela Wrong: And when he actually did go public, he went first to a Kenyan newspaper. I know this for a fact, because I was begging him to give me the story. And he kept saying, no, no, no, no, I want it to be published in the Kenyan -- the Daily Nation is the biggest Kenyan paper -- no, you know, I'll tell you what's going on, but you cannot publish a word until the Daily Nation has it. And the irony was that because it took so long for the Daily Nation, which was trying to double-check every single allegation he made, at the end of the day, someone from The Times [of London] who didn't know John, and hadn't made all these kind of "Yes, John, I will observe, I will respect, I won't break the battle vow of silence", came along and just splurged the story and scooped the Daily Nation and everyone else.

Warren Hoge: And the FT too, right?

Michela Wrong: Oh yeah, definitely. Yes. [laughs]. But you asked about his international role. I mean, he sat on a World Bank panel that was investigating corruption inside the World Bank, and I think he found that fascinating. This is under Wolfowitz. And surprisingly, John had some very...sort of has a lot of respect for Wolfowitz, because I think he feels that the World Bank was well overdue for a reformer from...

Warren Hoge: He pushed the...I mean as unpopular...

Michela Wrong: He pushed the anti-corruption agenda and there are many people at the World Bank who feel that when Wolfowitz went, and there were historical reasons and

Iraq was one of the reasons why he went, the baby that got thrown out in the bath water was the anti-corruption drive of the World Bank. And they regret that.

But, I mean, I think John...it has been very interesting watching his...the way he's changed, because John was a great believer in donor aid and very close to DfID [Department for International Development, UK], my aid ministry from Britain, and very into sort of the West piling in and helping Africa. Interestingly enough, now he's very, very skeptical about that sort of stuff, and he feels that aid in a way is the expression of a form of sort of implicit racism. The whole reaction towards corruption in Africa is implicitly racist because it's this sort of sense of "Well, they can't help themselves, this is the way they are, you know? The corruption is...you have to accept it, this is the way Africa is." And he really objects to that. And I think he has a point, so it's interesting to see how his reaction to the way the West engages with Africa has shifted.

Warren Hoge: When Hillary Clinton...one reason that Michela may think that Hillary Clinton read her book is the morning that I saw it on The New York Times website, I sent it to you directly. I suspect that was the first time you saw that she had said these things. Because I was struck at how responsive it was to the issues you raise in the book, when she got to Kenya and raised the issue of corruption. But she was very tough also, interestingly, about the threat of the international criminal court, an interesting threat from an American official, since the U.S. is not a signatory to the Rome treaty that created the court.

Michela Wrong: Yes. Yes.

Warren Hoge: But, I mean, basically saying if your courts don't take this up, the international courts will come in.

Michela Wrong: Yes.

Warren Hoge: How did that go down?

Michela Wrong: Well, there were reasons why Kenyans don't want...many Kenyans don't want the people who are responsible for the violence during the election to be tried in Kenya. There is a cynical reason for that, and there's a genuine reason for that. The cynical reason, which is no doubt harbored by the many people within the government, including key ministers, who are responsible for fomenting and inciting that ethnic violence, is they just want to never be tried at all. They want complete impunity. The genuine reason, that you see expressed a lot on the websites, is that ordinary Kenyans simply don't trust their own courts. And they simply don't believe that a Kenyan court will not be corrupted and subverted and paid off, and this is what has happened repeatedly through Kenyan history. So they want the issue to go and be tried in The Hague because they think that's the only way they'll get justice. So in a way, America is expressing its own point of view, which is a slightly bizarre point of view given that America doesn't, you know, didn't sign up for the ICC. You know...but the Kenyans do have a reason...ordinary Kenyans have a reason for why they...

Warren Hoge: I was going to ask you about their own belief in their own judiciary, but you've just answered the question. I'm getting a wave from the back; the books have arrived, so I'm happy about that. So when we're through here, there will be books in the back that you can bring up to Michela and she will sign them for you.

I think probably I will go to the floor, though I was going to ask you a little bit about the transformation of Nairobi. We can talk about that later because that

was an interesting part of your book. Let's start with the Ford Foundation, yes? [inaudible] If you could wait for the microphone to come to you and then if you please could identify yourself, and these microphones you have to hold very close to your mouth. Thank you.

Tade Aina:

Is that okay? Thank you very much, Michela. I'm glad to be here and I want to ask a very sensitive question because before we met, I had read two of your books. I'd read the book on Congo and the book on Eritrea. And I can hear a sort of blanket appeal to the international world to act with regards to Africa from the perspective of what you call tough love. But there is something about your work that is actually fascinating because beyond the literary imagination, there's an empathy in the understanding of Africa, and I want to ask you in terms of talking, not only speaking, in terms of speaking truth to power in Africa, how can we address the international world. How can we address people from the north to talk to Africa in a way that is not condescending and patronizing...from the perspective of, you know, what I can see in the way we deal with the continent in terms of using different standards. Thank you.

Michela Wrong:

That's, that's a toughie. [laughter] I think one of the things is to talk at all actually because one of the things that's really impressed me about Dambisa Moyo's book, which as I say I didn't find that original, but boy has it had an impact! And why has it had an impact? Because she's African. Why is Andrew Munda, you know, from Uganda had an impact? Because he's African. And I think one of the problems we've had in Africa so far is that so many of the people who are really bright, really well educated went into government and they became ministers and they became permanent secretaries or they got stolen by the international institutions. And so they weren't free to talk in...you know, [inaudible] institutions...there was an infrastructural reason why they weren't free to just sit there and express their opinions and criticize the West, criticize their own governments.

And so there's been a real shortage of independent voices. And then people like me come along and, because we're sitting in the West and we can be more open because we don't have to worry about our family, we don't have to worry about our jobs, we don't have to worry about our future pensions. But I think these voices are going to come through in Africa as more and more really well-educated Africans are going back from universities here and engaging with Africa and they've got their own very outspoken ideas. I mean, Andrew Rugasira is someone from Uganda who's always being quoted in the British press. I don't know about here. I think the British media, and I suspect the American media, is desperate to hear these African voices. So I don't think that they have a problem when they express themselves, getting a forum, but I do think that these people have to be free, they have to be independent. And that has been a problem, that independence. And I think that the more and more people emerge, this is going to happen. It's inevitable... I mean, you know yourself, you ran the Ford Foundation, you were always looking, I suspect, for projects that allowed Africans to change their own society. So...

Warren Hoge:

John Hirsch?

John Hirsch:

First of all, thank you very much not only for...

Warren Hoge:

Introduce yourself, please.

John Hirsch:

I'm with the International Peace Institute. Thank you very much for your...both of your presentations, but above all for your books, which I think have really

contributed an enormous amount to a better understanding of these great difficulties that you've summarized tonight.

I want to ask you about Kofi Annan's mediation a year ago and its relationship to the problems that you're raising of corruption, good governance, the future of Kenya. Kindly give us your assessment: do you think, first of all, that was a big achievement, what Kofi Annan did at the time? It was at the time presented as a tremendously important prevention of further violence and so on, but secondly, what do you think has been the impact a year and a half later? Do you think that his efforts and whatever efforts he might be continuing to make have any bearing, significance in terms of resolving these problems? Or is this all just going to be kind of brushed aside and there's more corruption, all the problems you've highlighted and things in Kenya may not well...may not change, notwithstanding his efforts. So, could you kind of relate that?

Michela Wrong:

Yeah. I think the achievement of that coalition government was such a relief to people in Kenya because really we were set to have round 2. And everyone was primed and everyone had been armed, and the ethnic militias were ready to go. And I think there was a sense that he...that agreement just stopped Kenya going over the edge. So people were very, very grateful.

I know Roger Cohen wrote a long piece about this deal and it was presented as though it was uniquely African and only an African could have done it. I've never understood that. I don't see what's uniquely African about that agreement. It was the common sense agreement. And, you know, so it was a massive relief.

I think the time that has elapsed since has shown the problem with these coalition governments that are being formed in Kenya. We're seeing the same thing in Zimbabwe, which is one side is always the loser. And Morgan Tsvangirai is not emerging well out of what happened in Zimbabwe. And is now becoming a great apologist for Mugabe and is losing a lot of credibility in the eyes of his own camp. And the same thing has happened in Kenya with Raila Odinga, who hasn't in the eyes of his Luo community delivered. And is not regarded as being effective. There's been a series of corruption scandals since then involving not only Kibaki's PNU, but also Raila Odinga's own ministers. So the corruption continues, the arming of the militias continues. Apparently, there is no effective governing, there is no effective collaboration between the two.

I think these are very unhappy compromises. And my sense in Kenya – I'm extremely worried about Kenya and its future – because the sense that you get when you talk to anybody who comes back from Kenya -- I haven't been since I published my book -- is that people are just waiting and they're saying: we'll sort this all out at the next elections. And when they say "sort this all out," they don't mean in a good way, they mean we will finish round 2, which is a very stupid way of thinking, because we all know that that never sorts...you know, nothing is sorted out when you resort to that kind of violence on the ground. You just create a whole generation of new problems.

Rwanda taught us that, I think. But these coalition governments, they kind of hold things in suspension and they don't seem to deal a solution. They could do, if there was goodwill there. And I think what you see in Kenya, and in Zimbabwe too, there is no goodwill, there is no intention of making it work. You have a massive crisis of leadership in both countries, and everyone is just waiting to fight it out.

And I'm very concerned about Kenya, and I knew that's why I was very pleased to see Clinton's remarks, because it's quite obvious that the Obama administration is also extremely worried about Kenya. And I think everyone should be preparing for what happens in Eastern Africa if the fighting breaks out again, Kenya's roads become impassible and then you get the whole of Uganda, Rwanda and Eastern Congo that can't import any goods because they can't get them from the ports of Mombasa, and so the whole region goes into crisis.

So I don't have any solutions, I'm afraid, but I think coalition governments are a kind of sticking plaster, and they... if there was the goodwill there, they could have been more effective. But the goodwill has not been there.

Warren Hoge: Oh, let's see, I have a question right here, this gentleman, right in front of you Marvin. If you would please introduce yourself.

Chika Onyeani: My name is Chika Onyeani. I'm with the African Sun Times in the New York area. And some of what I was very happy to see people like you write about corruption in Africa -

Warren Hoge: You have to hold the microphone very close to your mouth to be heard.

Chika Onyeani: - but you know, Africans are always intrigued about when they see the kind of massive corruption, somebody like Madoff. I mean, what do Africans make of that when there is all this focus about corruption in Africa? So we look at what is happening, the other person, about \$7 billion, Stanford, and all that, you know, and Madoff, \$60 billion, and then we focus, people like you, as I said, some of us are very happy to make sure that when you write this thing, that we spread the word. But how do you address the hypocrisy that Africans see with what is happening here in America, and the focus about corruption in Africa? Thank you.

Michela Wrong: Well, to be fair, I suspect more books will be written about Madoff than will be written about Kenyan corruption, and I think they already have been written. Of course, corruption's not an African issue. I mean, it's a universal issue. It's human nature, and I've been giving speeches about my book, and it's really interesting, because people, Koreans come up to me and say, "What you've just described is Korea," or an Egyptian just came up to me the other day and said, "What you've described is Egypt," or somebody who worked a lot in Beirut came up to me and said, "What you've described is Lebanon."

So I would never claim this is uniquely African, and I never wanted to say that. This is just what happens to be what I write about. But I think there is, the point that needs to be made, is that Madoff's victims are not the same as the victims of Kenyan corruption, and if you drive around Kibera slum in the center of Nairobi, which is right there next to State House and see the living standards there, the victims, there is no safety net in countries like Kenya. So if you've got a government that is stealing or trying to steal, and they're trying to steal the equivalent of the annual aid budget, which is what Mwai Kibaki's government tried to do, you know, but people are left with nothing, there is no one picking those people up and making sure that they have basic living standards.

I think in this country, despite the fact that I know your health system is not perfect, it's not exactly the same, so I think the ruthlessness of the corruption in Africa is what gets people really angry, but the victims -- and I think this is the interesting thing about Kenya recently -- is that people who never understood where corruption affected them have begun to see the connections, because there's been a grain scandal, there's been a fuel scandal, so the grain became

unaffordable or couldn't be bought, the fuel became unaffordable so they couldn't afford to travel to work in the taxis, so they began to see the links between these massive scandals that seemed very abstract, and their own living standards, so I think that's why people get particularly angry about corruption in Africa.

Warren Hoge: I saw a hand in that corner there. Is it still up? Yes, there you are. Just wait for the microphone, and please introduce yourself, and hold the microphone very close to your mouth.

Dire Tladi: This close? Is that good enough? Dire Tladi from the South African Permanent Mission. I want to thank you for your talk, and I certainly look forward to reading your book. I was very interested in the reasons that you identified for what you call the "see no evil, hear no evil" syndrome that characterizes the activities of the donors, and you mentioned a couple of reasons or explanations that you thought might be explanation for these activities. I think one of them was a desire for some kind of stability, and the second one was what you call the humanitarian vision, but I was just wondering if maybe there isn't another reason, that this is this fear that donors have faced for a long time, and the criticism that is looking into the governance style, and the governance system and the corruption and so on, is actually not a form of neo-imperialism, and I wonder if you go into that in your book? Thank you.

Michela Wrong: I think that's quite right. That is why the World Bank traditionally, until Wolfensohn came along, James Wolfensohn, traditionally you weren't supposed to talk about corruption. It was an unacceptable violation of national sovereignty. But I think that now, that's no longer regarded as being the case, and I think that's the connection that has to be made, that you cannot support a government without tackling the issue of corruption because, you know, otherwise you're just pouring in water one end, and the water is flowing out of a hole on the other side, so I think that era has passed now.

But yes, there is definitely, I would now identify it in a different way, and I think what you've seen in countries like my own, is you've seen foreign policy divided off from aid, and the idea was foreign policy was one thing, and aid and development was another, and people who were giving aid wouldn't get mixed up in politics, and this idea that you could develop, you could supply development and supply aid in a non-political style, and I think that's nonsense, and that we're moving on from that perception as well. You cannot have politics-neutral aid. If you're going to provide a country with 700-whatever, \$850 million, it obviously has a political impact, and it helps that government win elections. It often is the only thing that wins that government elections. So you know, there are various phases that the aid debate goes through, but I think now the notion that you can't talk about corruption, I think we have moved on, or we are moving on from that.

Warren Hoge: Lots of hands. Haile, would you go first? And then this gentleman here, and then the one in the corner.

Haile Menkerios: Thank you. Haile Menkerios from the UN. It's a huge situation, and I wonder which part of the UN in New York City did give a clear –

Warren Hoge: A public service award?

Haile Menkerios: It was definitely not DPA, the kind of house in the DPA that I belong to. Anyway, I've read your books, and I can see that you're a keen observer of what is happening. And the problem is if we are to see how is Africa, which is ruled by this small elite, which operates in a milieu, in a situation, totally different than the

elite that led to the development of those which are economically sort of advanced countries, industrialized countries, let's say. They don't behave, they don't act the same way, but the assumption is that these countries are going to develop in the same way, in the same process, as the Western, economically, sort of advanced countries would develop.

But it's a totally different arena, it's a different situation now, it's a globalized sort of economy -- there were no World Banks, no IMFs, no aid coming in, and you live in a world where opportunities exist now outside of your country, you ask students, for example, young people, what are you going to do when you grow up? Before, it was, "Well, I do this, I'll be a teacher," within their country now, you ask them, "I'll work for the UN, I'll work with UNDP," it's a whole global... and therefore, their commitment to education, to the promotion of social services inside their country as an important step for their own future doesn't exist to them.

In Congo, for example, where you wrote your first book, where this idea of corruption of, "Push me, and then I'll pull you once I get there," it's so common. You see the elite have even double citizenship; their children go to school in Brussels, or in Paris somewhere, and for medical treatment, even for a cold, they go there, and you cannot imagine these elite, therefore, to be the instrument for the progress in the health service or in the educational system. So who is going to be that instrument of change, then, in this society? Are we doomed to go through crisis after crisis and corrupt groups which by necessity go to corruption, because the idea is, you're not so sure what's going to happen tomorrow, so grab while you can! I mean, that's exactly what we see in many of them. How is change to come? Who would be the agent of change?

Warren Hoge: That's an easy question, Michela.

Michela Wrong: Another easy question! I think there's a very interesting statistic about Africa, about Kenya, but about every African country, which is that 70% of the population is below the age of 40 or even 35. Now that's actually a very frightening statistic, but it's also a very hopeful statistic, and you're seeing this great urbanization taking place and this rush to the cities and the melting pots that you get in the cities, and I think that I'm probably correct in saying that in the slums of places like Kenya, living standards are really tough, but education standards are higher than in the rural areas. That's what the statistics show, and the surveys show, so just because they're slum dwellers doesn't necessarily mean that they're illiterate or stupid, and I just think, you know, this is the Sheng generation. If you look at the elite of Africa, they tend to be, what's very striking often about the political elite of African countries is, in my country, nobody who was around in the 60s is a key political player in Britain anymore. I think that's probably fair to say. In African countries, they often still are on the scene, and then maybe their sons are being groomed. We are on the --

Warren Hoge: That sort of thing never happens in the United States, by the way [Laughter].

Michela Wrong: Well, you have your families, your dynasties, don't you? Well so do we. But we're on the verge, it seems to me, of a generational change. Could be very frightening what happens, because those slums are very angry and very hungry, but I think John is almost old now by the standards of that generation, and what has been interesting for me is to see the response from the websites. You know, I was appalled that my book, the PDF of my book, was just stolen and stolen and stolen, and spread across, it was viral. I kept getting these messages saying, "Oh, I just got sent a copy of your book! Isn't that great?" And I'm kinda going,

"No, it's not great, actually." And there were websites where it could be downloaded, and people were sending me copies of my own book to prove that they had it, because they were really pleased with themselves. Anyway, it was appalling from my perspective, but really interesting sociologically, because you just sort of go, none of this existed 10 years ago, the cybernet cafes on every corner, this generation of people who are Facebooking. I get Facebooked by Kenyans all the time, I get Facebooked by Eritreans all the time, all these links, all these campaigns. I mean, I can't say exactly where change is going to come in Africa, but it seems to me it's all coming from that kind of direction.

Warren Hoge: The gentleman in the blue shirt there.

Mohammed: Hi, my name's Mohammed, I'm actually from Kenya, I'm from the Kenyan coast. Just to follow up with some of the questions that have already been asked. I'm quite surprised that Githongo was surprised about the corruption. The Kenyan system, I mean [unintelligible] during the elections and the elections before that, [unintelligible] nobody tells you what they're going to do when they get into government. So for many Kenyans, it's not a surprise, and those who normally don't like what they see are those who are not eating in many ways. How does an ordinary peasant in a village express outrage? When the politicians start spending taxpayers' money, I'll be pissed off then! And that is the system that we have, and that completely contradicts and undermines the process, I think.

Michela Wrong: Yeah, but to be honest, in Kenya, aid under Kibaki was 4% of the operating budget, the government. So actually, I think the link between taxpayers and government, that was one of the things the Kenyan, the Kibaki government really did, they began to collect taxpayers' money, you know, the KRA was incredibly efficient, and I could see the change in the Kenyans I was speaking to, who were saying, "They're stealing my money!" It was amazing! Normally, we steal your money. And you could see the penny beginning to drop!

So that was actually a very interesting change, and I think, you know, African governments are getting a lot better at collecting taxes. They're learning that you can do that, and there's a lot of money there under mattresses, but it's a worthwhile enterprise, so I think that linkage is being made in people's mind, but you say, John, was he surprised? Was he surprised, or was he just surprised by the extent of it, and the naked greed of it, because I think everyone -- and I think this is always the donor's view -- they expect there to be a certain amount of corruption, yes, but when you have corruption that is so large that effectively it just gobbles everything up, I think that's quite surprising.

I think John thought that there would be small corruption scandals under his watch, and they would come from various parts of the ethnic community, and he would do his bit to try and stop them, but I think it was the greed and the crudity of Anglo Leasing that shocked, and I think you do need... if Africa's going to change, you do need people to be a bit shocked, because I'm always struck when I'm in Africa, the shrug of the shoulders and, "Oh, I'll just pay the bribe because it's easier," and you kind of think, that is part of the problem, and if you're never going to be shocked, and you're never going to make a fuss, and you're never going to refuse and never going to negotiate with a policeman at a roadblock, then you are asking for, you're bringing it upon yourself, so you need people to go in there and then be shocked. Governments need people like John.

Warren Hoge: There's a woman in a red sweater who's had her hand up a long time ago.

Nellie Myinda:

Hi, my name is Nellie Myinda, and I am from the Sheng generation that you hear being talked about here. I have two points, and the first point that I want to raise is that this whole point about where change is going to come from in my generation and different generations, and I am from the Sheng generation, and I grew up in the streets of Nairobi, but I don't think that I'm the one who's going to bring change to Kenya for the simple reason that I was largely influenced by my parents, and my parents belong to that generation of Kibaki and Raila. I think because that's the way they brought me up, I'm still very much caught up in that way of thinking very ethnic. But even worse I see a lot of that kind of thinking being perpetrated in the diaspora, and I'd really like your comment on that, because I think that a lot the ideas, you know that I am from this ethnic group, or I'm from that ethnic group, you still see it being played out, even here in New York today.

And there was a point about corruption in the West and all these people and how they are able to get away with it, but I think that the simple answer to that is: Madoff is in prison today. You don't have that same kind... there isn't that same kind of impunity. But in Kenya today, you steal \$100 billion, and you get away with it, and so I think that the critical point here for Africa is to have the institutions that can ensure that people don't do this kind of thing with total impunity, the way we have seen it played out in Africa.

The other point I wanted to raise was about elitism and the fact that we are looking to the elite, but these elite are the same people. They come out here, they learn different ways of doing things, and they go back to Africa and still carry the same ideas with them, and I don't see them changing because it's about survival and self-preservation so they carry the same ideas. There was the point about the small group in Nairobi, but Nairobi's water drives Kenya, and this is where these people come from, so, even if it's a small population, this is really the core of corruption in Kenya, so we shouldn't just totally say it's a small population, and the vast majority of Kenyans are rural. Thank you.

Michela Wrong:

Yeah, I agree with you on many points. On the Madoff point, I've seen a lot of articles, and sometimes in the Kenyan press, saying, "Oh, look at these Brits with their expensive scandal! They shouldn't be preaching to Africans about corruption! Look how disgusting they all are, and they've been filling their pockets."

But in Britain, MPs resigned. They may have done so unwillingly, and some of them are probably going to be prosecuted, and they've lost their seats. That hasn't happened in Kenya. So again, I would say there's an impunity issue in Africa that we don't see maybe in the West quite so much. Here they do get away with it for years and years and years, but eventually, there is some retribution.

On the diaspora, I think diasporas are really interesting. I think one of the symptoms that happens when you go abroad is you tend to get more ethnically aware because you miss home, and you tend to gather with people from your own community, you often live next to them, and then there's this kind of chauvinism that comes out, it can be a very positive thing, but it can also be a negative thing. And I think what you then find is when members of those diasporas go home and they see the kind of mess that Kenya is in, or Eritrea is in, then they change their attitudes. It's very easy to be ethnically chauvinistic when you're living over here, and I think when you go home, it changes, and about the elites being the same, I mean first I think change comes from elites, it comes from urban elites, it doesn't come from rural populations. I mean, you tend

to see that through history, it comes from aristocrats: Trotsky, Lenin, all of, on the whole, the really big movers and shakers are members of the educated elite.

You know, we have been talking all evening about a member of the elite who had every reason to shut up, go along with the system, buy a big villa, turn a blind eye to corruption, I mean, that's John Githongo. He went to school with Eric Wainaina, who was another great anti-corruption campaigner. I can mention many other members of that elite who have decided not to be like their fathers and uncles, so this is not fixed in stone, it does not remain the same forever. People change. Generations change, and there are tussles and fights that take place within those elites, and eventually, we end up with something different, so I don't see any point in shrugging your shoulders and just going, "Oh, it's always going to be the same."

John Githongo, the reason I wrote the book about John Githongo was because he was a really interesting example of somebody who shrugged off his own inheritance and decided not to do what everyone expected him to do. Why did he decide to do that? I still don't really know the full answer to that, but that's why I thought it was worth writing a book about him.

Warren Hoge: Gentleman there?

Duncan Muhumuza: Thank you very much. Duncan, I'm a citizen of Africa. But I'm not one of those who feels embarrassed when a lot of corruption reporting is done about Africa. I don't care how much there might be in the West. I just want it to be eradicated in Africa! What bothers me, though, is that there is a lot of profiteering from the corruption in Africa by the West. I will give an example. There was a gentleman by the name -- if I mention, you will probably remember him -- Mobutu. Forbes Magazine, I think, rated him as one of the richest in the world. When he died, his monies were in the Swiss banks and whatever -- sorry for the Swiss. But you know, immediately he died, they looked for Mobutu's money, it couldn't be found. Just recently, I think about a couple weeks ago, they caught in Europe, I don't know the country, but you'll probably be able to tell us. They said Mobutu's family is entitled to his \$6 million that was in his account. Where are the billions that made Mobutu one of the richest men in the world? And who benefits from that money?

There is -- is it an English or American expression? -- "Follow the money." We would like to follow that money, we would like to see where it is, we would like to see who benefits from it, take it back to Africa. That bothers me when we say, "Oh, you know, these guys are corrupt and stuff." Please, one of the solutions that can help eradicate this corruption, or at least reduce it: if there are no abettors and aiders of this, because the banks that this money is kept in, are for the most part not African, and the money has a trade, because it is so much anyway. So what can we say about that? Thank you.

Michela Wrong: No, I completely agree. In fact, I didn't focus on this in the book, because I was focusing on other things, and at a certain stage with books, you do have to end them, otherwise no one will read them. My own country has an appalling record on prosecuting companies and individuals that go abroad and pay massive bribes, and has rightly been held to ridicule and criticism by the OECD, and you know, very, very hypocritical approach, and British banks don't have a very good record either in terms of returning money. For example, Sani Abacha's money, the Nigerian money that he stole. The States has a much better record. It's brought over 100 cases against foreign companies that pay bribes abroad, one of

them being Halliburton, amazingly enough, given its political contacts.. Halliburton in Nigeria.

But obviously this is a massive subject, and this is an area in which the West does need to clean up its act. It really does. It is belatedly and slowly beginning to do that. The advent of the Chinese in Africa has, I think, worked to slow down this, because one of the arguments that Western companies, or Western men have at the back of their minds is, "Well, if we don't pay bribes, the Chinese will." And so that's like, "We have to pay bribes, otherwise all the contracts will go to the Chinese, and they're totally ruthless about paying bribes."

But just to finish up with a Mobutu story, it's very interesting that the story with the Mobutu missing millions in Switzerland, which by the way, were incredibly small, I think we're talking about \$6 million worth, it's not the amount of money he stole from Congo by any means. The courts returned them to the family for one simple reason. The government in Kinshasa did not want that money back, because it had made accommodations for Mobutu's family, who were playing a role in politics. One of his sons is a minister, and they simply did not ask and did not pursue, and the Swiss investigators and prosecutors had offered them the opportunity.

And we're seeing something similar in Kenya where the serious fraud office in my country, which doesn't like to investigate corruption abroad, but finally did with Anglo Leasing, went to the attorney general in Kenya and said, "Here are the files. This is where the money went from Anglo Leasing, as far as we know," and the attorney general has not all of the information, because he doesn't want to prosecute people in Kenya, and there's this game being played with the attorney general blaming Justice [Aaron] Ringera, who's the head of the KACC, the Anti-Corruption Commission. And then they blame the serious fraud office, and you know, strangely enough, this information just floats around, and nobody in Kenya has taken delivery of it, despite the fact that the serious fraud office keeps offering it to them. So, often the African governments themselves have made accommodations or are in the game themselves and do not want that information and do not want that trail to be followed up. I'm afraid it's a very cynical story.

Warren Hoge:

This has to be the last question right here. Just wait for the microphone to come to you, please.

Kowee:

Hello, my name is Kowee. I am Kenyan and intrigued by your book and by everything you said today. I had a question on one of the solutions you propose regarding having an international police force to supervise the next election. I'm sure you're aware that the local press in Kenya, the entire focus of any kind of political analysis or discussion is 2012, and who's going to do what, and all the jockeying around that, and so this idea sounds intriguing about the police force. I guess, I have two questions: one, is that just your point of view, like an ideal solution, or is that actually something that's being discussed, or contemplated? And then two, would it be unique, because as far as I'm aware, the only time you have international forces monitoring elections in that kind of context could be, say, like in Cambodia, for example, after pretty much everyone was done, died. Is there any way that we can have something that would be pre-emptive, what's your take on that? Is that something that's being lobbed out there for everyone to think about, or is that something that can actually happen?

Michela Wrong:

I was in Kenya during the election, during the months that went disastrously wrong, and I think we were very close to either civil war or a military takeover. And I think most Kenyans felt that, and I don't think that this is stuff that we can

play with again. We can't just expect the next elections to be okay. They will not be okay. And in fact, the crisis comes, is coming up a lot faster, because we've got a referendum on a new constitution coming up, and that's going to be an issue around which you can see ethnic mobilization and the whole fight between who really holds power in this country. Is it the Prime Minister, is it the President, is it going to be that Kikuyu group and its entourage, or is it going to be... so this is coming up long before 2012. We have to accept that it's coming up fast, and I simply don't see how elections can be peacefully staged in Kenya at the moment.

You've had a UN rapporteur, Philip Alston, two guys were killed who basically provided the evidence of how 5,000 people have been extra-judicially executed by the police in Kenya in recent years. So this is, it's...there will of course be complaints by the Kenyan government of national sovereignty being violated, and you know, "This is an outrage, and this is neo-colonialist." Absolutely.

But this is not a game. This is serious, this is a serious crisis situation, and I would like to see the international community basically foisting that on the Kenyan government, because I can see that there will be objections, because if you have another non-credible election in Kenya, I really dread to think what will happen.

Warren Hoge:

Michela, you are so interesting, and this is group is so interested, we could keep going all night, and we can't do that, we're out of time. Michela will stay right here, I will get her a glass of wine so she can stay here. She has her pen, there are books in the back, and I'm sure she'd be interested in talking with those of you who had questions who couldn't get them in. Thank you very much.