Why true nationalists must rise above tribe

By BILL KEMBO

Today I hope I can speak to Kenyans’ hearts. How many of us have grown tired, tired of seeing Dr Kofi Annan, tired of seeing former President Benjamin Mkapa and Mrs Graca Marcelle come to Kenya to resolve our conflicts? I know I have. The time is ripe for the scripting of a new scene.

It is about time we gave these eminent personalities an opportunity to visit this country for nothing more than a tan in one of our pristine beaches in Mombasa.

The time is ripe for Kenyans to start calling Abbas Gullot of the Kenya Red Cross for example, not to collect corpses, but to help with sustainability projects like the very successful irrigation projects he is running in Turkana.

18 MILLION-PLUS VOTERS

How many of us remember Bernard Orinda? He lost everything in the violence of 2007. He lost his property and 11 of his family members. Bernard has a new wife called Alice Akoth and a beautiful daughter he named Mary Akinyi.

Bernard cannot afford to lose Alice and Mary too. It is upon us as Kenyans to ensure this doesn’t happen from this same fate.

I ask myself why we need police presence in polling stations. Are we so immature that we need to be watched like toddlers? The number of people intent on causing chaos is far smaller than the rest of us 18 million-plus eligible voters. Kenyans, don’t you think if we took on them we would steer this country to its most peaceful election ever?

If we pooled our prayers, if we protected our neighbours’ votes regardless of whom they favour, if we all signed up to the “rise above tribe” army, if we simply said NO to giving a platform to divisive ethnic-based politics and politicians we would reclaim this country.

Tafakari hayo.

Why should we do this? Because tribe has become a key consideration in every aspect of life, employment, awarding of contracts, politics. A repeat of 2007 is very real.

The slaughter in the Tana, the endless reckless talk. We should do this because we believe that this time must be different, that this time we must raise our voices.

There are no Rift Valley, Nyanza or Central Kenya interests. The hunger felt by a Kenyan in Turkana is the same as that felt by a jobless man, woman or child in Nairobi’s central business district.

ACKNOWLEDGING STRIDES

My aspirations as a citizen should and must never change because the tenant at the Hill has changed. The only interests I know are those of over 40 million Kenyans period.

We are not oblivious of the challenges that we face, a Kenya in need of more healing and forgiveness than at any time in its independent existence. Even as we engage with our lives uninterrupted, our soldiers are braving the battle with the Al Shabaab in Somalia, risking their lives so that we can be safe back home but we remain well aware that the greater war lies right here, in our homes, in our workplaces, in our minds and more importantly in our hearts.

There are Kenyans who fall asleep and worder where their children’s next meal will come from, or if they’ll wake up to their village in flames. There are those of us wondering if our homes, families, businesses or organisations will survive this election.

QUOTING OBAMA

We must send a message to Kenyans and to the world that we have never just been a collection of Kikuyus, Luos, Pokots, Ormas or Pokonomos but we have been, are and always will be, one rose flower with elegantly scented petals — one Kenya.

The onus is on us to summon a new spirit of patriotism, a new kind of responsibility where each of us will look after not only ourselves, but our brother’s keepers.

Quoting President Obama — “that in this country, we rise or fall as one nation — as one people”.

I invite you to believe, I invite you to rise above tribe.

The writer is the Network & Communications Infrastructure Administrator at the Standard Group and a member of the “rise above tribe” army.