

ANP/ 007/0054/2

TO : THE MINISTER MINR
THE ADVISOR TO THE MINISTER MINR
THE DEPUTY MINISTER ADJM
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THE DEPUTY DIRECTORS GENERAL
MULTILATERAL AFFAIRS DDGM
ASIA & MIDDLE EAST MDDG
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OPERATIONAL SERVICES DOPR
THE PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE PARL

FROM : MACHIEL VAN NIEKERK DMED4

THROUGH : MARCO BONI DMED3

DATE : 05 -06 JULY 1998

SUBJECT : MEDIA CLIPPINGS : MEDIA NEWSPAPERS

Please receive press clippings of current issues in the following order:

1. Ministry and Department.
2. SA Bilateral Relations.

Double Page Spread

①

Selebi takes over foreign affairs with

ORIAN HADLAND

At a scenic, ancient stone bridge beneath Stockholm's royal palace, the new director-general of foreign affairs, Jackie Selebi, was blinking in the weak northern light. Dragged out of a nearby conference on the culture of democracy, where he was giving the keynote address, the eloquent, portly and immaculately dressed Selebi was ending his last few days as South Africa's ambassador to Geneva. After 20 years in exile and three years as head of mission in Switzerland, Selebi returned home this week to begin his new job. The post will require very different skills from those of his predecessor, Rusty Evans, but only those who know Selebi have high expectations. Bidding him farewell at the conference, former Commonwealth secretary-general Sir Shridath Ramphal said Selebi would undoubtedly play "an increasingly important role

in moulding South Africa's place in the international community".

Others, though, in particular representatives of Southern African Development Community (SADC) member countries, are more ambivalent.

According to some diplomats, Selebi's appointment as chairman of a multilateral conference on landmines and his chairmanship of the United Nations Human Rights Committee were received with less than enthusiasm from some SADC representatives.

Just more evidence, they complained privately, of South Africa's growing ambitions, of its aspirations in the region and of its intent to become the Big Brother of the SADC family.

But strengthening regional ties, dragging South Africa's diplomatic corps and foreign policies into the new millennium and fighting the government for more resources are just some of the tasks Selebi will face in the years ahead.

He is undoubtedly aware that

there are major expectations not only of him but of South Africa.

Ramphal said: "The new South Africa is in great demand to use its strength, including its moral strength, to bring its healing touch to the conflictual situations with which the continent is littered."

After heading the ANC Youth League in exile and serving on the party's national executive, the amiable 48-year-old Selebi has spent years knocking around the salons and meeting rooms of foreign embassies and multilateral organisations from Lusaka to Budapest.

But his "coming of age" can arguably be pinpointed at a particular moment in Oslo in September last year when, against all protocols, he was asked to chair an international conference on landmine policy.

Little progress had been made for years on the issue and Selebi's appointment was regarded as a bold, some thought foolish, move to bring South African pragmatism and negotiating skills to bear on a tough, con-

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Members/Lede: C. Anastassiades, L. Dabbs

trained in trade law. They must know how to sell and promote South Africa," he said.

Reacting to recent concerns that budgetary constraints had necessitated cuts in the department, Selebi insisted that savings could be made from within. "There are ways we can make savings, where services are duplicated and where we can reduce expenditure without destroying effectiveness," he says.

Selebi believes that South Africa has something inherently important to offer to the international community. "There are many issues around the globe that are very, very difficult. But we have shown that the resolution of these issues is possible. We did it in Oslo where we achieved things which had taken many years to try and achieve."

The feat at Oslo was repeated soon afterwards when Selebi headed negotiations on the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Human Rights Defenders. Again, after 13 years of fruitless talks, a solution was found and the declaration was finalised. Selebi's reputation, at least overseas, had been secured.

"We have been able to achieve these things because of the confidence we have been able to draw from what has happened in South Africa and from the policies coming out of South Africa. We are not afraid of discussing any human-rights situation or of making contributions to any debate."

Smiling as he walked back to the conference, Selebi looked around at the picturesque city he would soon be leaving for Geneva and then for home. He knows that things are only now getting really interesting for South Africa in its bid to secure a key role for itself in the global community.

"It is a good time to be a South African diplomat," he says.



Jackie Selebi: the new director-general of foreign affairs knows a lot is expected of him and South Africa PHOTOGRAPH: DAN VAN DER ZWAALM

understand the culture of the new South Africa and are imbued with the new sense of patriotism that will help South Africa occupy the space it deserves to occupy in the international community."

A second key objective is to ensure South Africa takes on tasks that are achievable. "We want a department that is alive, viable and strong

with good co-ordination and better policy research in order to assist the attainment of foreign policy goals. We also don't want to take on tasks that are simply not achievable."

Part of the new diplomacy in an environment of globalisation is the need for diplomats to be well schooled in matters of trade. "Every South African diplomat will be fully

controversial matter. "It was the first time a South African had been placed in a position to direct and bring about an international treaty, so there was a lot of pressure on us," says Selebi.

"Just before the first day of the conference, I called the deputy president [Thabo Mbeki] in Lausanne to wish him luck for the Olympic bid.

"He gave me a disguised instruction on the significance of the conference by telling me three times how important it was. That said to me 'You can't fail'. I went in knowing that if I failed I would disappoint not only myself but the leadership and the people of South Africa. I went in there determined and, thank God, was able to make it."

South Africa's ambassador to Norway, Stephen Gawe, takes up the story: "Even though the host country usually holds the chair, it was decided Selebi should take the position. By a combination of good preparation, research, inclusivity and thoroughness, he got through an agreement that many thought impossible. His most innovative move was to identify 'friends of the chair' beforehand to handle the more controversial matters in meetings outside of the full plenary. The way he concluded the negotiations won him praise from all quarters."

Gawe continued: "His astuteness in multilateral affairs and his understanding of the dynamics involved suggest he will play a vital role in the application of South Africa's foreign policy."

Selebi knows, however, that bringing South Africa up to speed in the international community is just one part of the new job. Equally important is the transformation of the department itself.

"One of the major issues is to build capacity within the department," he said. "We need people who

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Members/Leads: C. Anastasiades, L. Dabbs

Company: Dept Foreign Affairs Attention: Mr Marco BeniDate: 5/7/98 Fax No: 012 351 0260**NEWS CLIP**
04 11 1998

Madiba meets Caribbean community



^{D4}
FIRM 'HELLO'... South African President Nelson Mandela greets supporters upon his arrival at the airport in Castries, St Lucia on Thursday. Mandela met with Caribbean leaders during the annual Caribbean Community summit which went on till yesterday. ■ Pic: AP

CITY PRESS
5/7/98

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Members/Lede: C. Anastasiades, L. Dabbs

Mystery man in diamond ship deaths

DREW WHITLOCK

P4.

ICE have not disclosed the identity of the Namibian man who was arrested in connection with the deaths of two employees aboard the Debmar Pacific diamond mining vessel in the Atlantic Ocean off the Skeleton Coast in Namibia this week.

South African Alan Buris is still missing. The body of Namibian George Gamatham, an employee of De Beers Marine, was found on the ship early on Tuesday morning.

Department of Foreign Affairs spokesman Marco Boni said: "No further details of the incident have been given to us. We are waiting for a full report from the Namibian authorities."

Boni said his department had no information on Buris other than that he was a South African. Namibian police arrested and charged a Namibian De Beers employee on Tuesday in connection with the deaths of the two employees.

The man is being held at the police station in Lüderitz and is expected to appear in court in this week.



Pres. Nelson Mandela groet ondersteuners met sy aankoms eergister op die lughawe in Castries, St. Lucia. Mandela het Karibiese leiers ontmoet tydens die jaarlikse Karibiese Gemeenskapsberaad, wat vandag eindig.

NAWEEK BEELD
4/7/98

SUNDAY TIMES
5/7/98

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Boereleiers wil hof toe oor berigte

pio

Setlaars' in Mosambiek glo onseker

OF BUKA PIETERSEN:
hannesburg

E woordstryd tussen 'n erantredakteur van die oordelike Provinsie en twee ewerneurs van die South African Chamber For Agricultural Development in Africa (Sacada) oor bewerings dat Suid-Afrikaanse boere in Mosambiek aan hul eie lot oorgegaten word, gaan waarskynlik die hof draal.

Mnr. Johann Wingard, vice-president van Sacada, sê hulle gaan mnr. Frans Aucamp, besturende redakteur van die oordelike Monitor, vir 900 000 dagvaar weens oorspronklikheid. Hy sê aanvaarding in dié verband is reeds

op Aucamp bestel.

Aucamp ontkent dat hy enige kennisgewing oor 'n siviele eis ontvang het en sê hy is skriftelik deur Wingard se prokureurs gewaarsku om sy "lasterlike" beriggewing te staak.

In die berigte word verskeie aantygings teen onder andere Wingard en mnr. Dries Bruwer, voormalige president van die Transvaalse Landbouunie en tans president van Sacada, gemaak.

Wingard het teenoor Rapport erken dat van die setlaarboere in Mosambiek "bitter onseker" is oor die toekoms. Die rede is hoofsaaklik omdat geld wat in 1995 deur die Suid-Afrikaanse regering vir die hervestigingsprojek voor-



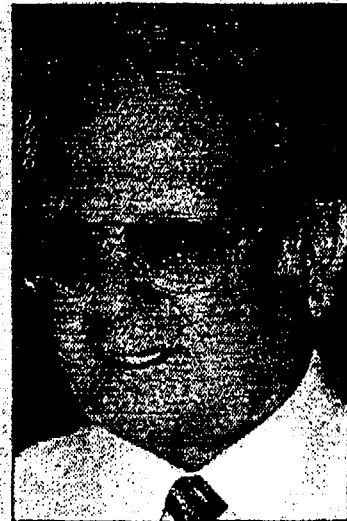
MNR. FRANS AUCAMP

geskiet is, nou haas uitgeput is.

Van die oorspronklike R13 miljoen is nog net R2,4 miljoen oor. Dié geld word nou deur die Departement van Buitelandse sake en Ontwikkelingsbank onder finansiële instansies in Mosambiek "gesindikeer" in 'n poging om lenings vir die Suid-Afrikaanse boere te bekom.

Volgens Wingard is onderhandelinge in dié verband reeds ver gevorder en sal daar hopelik binne die volgende dae goeie nuus wees vir die Suid-Afrikaners in Mosambiek.

• Intussen is daar nog geen



MNR. DRIES BRUWER

vordering gemaak in die polisie-onderzoek nadat daar verlede Woensdagaand by sy huis op Aucamp geskiet is nie. 'n Vermeende sluipmoordenaar het hom in 'n donker park langs sy huis in Pietersburg ingewag en 'n skoot op hom gevuur toe hy by 'n veiligheidshek in sy opryp pad stilhou.

Aucamp het dié week ten sterkste ontken dat hy ooit sou voorgegee het dat sy koerantondersoek na die sake van Sacada enigiets met die sluipmoordaanval te doen gehad het. "Daar is baie ander mense met griewe teen my," sê hy.

RAPPORT

5/7/98

Company: Dept of Foreign Affairs Attention: Mr Marco Bono

Date: 6.7.98 Fax No: 012 351 0260

NEWS CLIP
CC
OR 50 17950/23**ANC
'silent on
McBride'**

PRETORIA — Writer Gomolemo Mokae has demanded to know why the government is "doing nothing to defend the civil liberties" of Robert McBride, who is facing arms-smuggling charges in Mozambique.

Mr Mokae told the North-West congress of the Socialist Party of Azania (Sopa), held at Garankuwa, that while a number of ANC regions had recently held their congresses, their silence about the plight of Mr McBride was remarkable.

"Is the explanation for this inaction the fact that, for a long time, Robert McBride has been something like a black albatross around the neck of the ANC: an activist the ANC would wish away because somehow he makes it difficult for the organisation to get into the good books of white capital and the covert racist still hankering after the days when the black man knew his place?"

Mr Mokae urged the congress to be true to black consciousness by taking up the cudgels for Mr McBride. — Sapa

DAILY DISPATCH
Pge 9 6.7.98.

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NEWS CLIP

To: MARCO BENI Company: FOREIGN AFFAIRS
 Date: 06-07-98 Fax No: 351-0226 No of pages: 5

PLEA FOR PATIENCE, CO-OPERATION

Boost for KZN as 7 000 delegates attend summit

THE MERCURY 06-07-98

KATHY MOLONEY

ABOU 7 000 delegates and journalists from 112 countries will descend on Durban for the Non-Aligned Movement summit at the end of August – the largest event of its kind held in Africa.

Residents of Durban have been asked to bite their tongues and bear with possible traffic disruptions when red carpet treatment is laid on for an estimated 77 leaders of countries which could include the likes of Cuba's Fidel Castro, Libya's Muammar Gaddafi and Mr Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, and their entourages.

In a joint statement, Durban Chamber of Commerce and the metro council said this would be a major opportunity to showcase KwaZulu Natal to the 1 500 international journalists, 4 000 to 5 000 delegates and leaders as a tourism, investment and development mecca.

Potential

The summit will be held at the International Convention Centre from August 27 to September 3.

"It is important that the people of Durban recognise the potential that this summit provides to promote investment and economic development in this region," they said.

"The positive attitude of all of Durban's people is needed to ensure the success of this event."

However, such a marketing opportunity

does not come without any pain.

Major inconveniences for Durban's public and business sector could be expected as a result of road closures, traffic snail-ups and the tight security around the event.

The chamber has urged its members to advise business associates to avoid Durban's airport during this period and to reschedule business meetings for before or after the summit.

The areas likely to be affected include:

□ Road closures particularly around Walnut, Commercial, Ordnance and Stanger roads.

□ Traffic snail-ups as heads of state move with their motorcades from the hotels to the ICC in the mornings and evenings.

□ No parking in front of the hotels along the beachfront.

□ Further disruptions in the city centre which could affect deliveries into the CBD, including the Royal Hotel, where some delegates are expected to stay, and the airport, where flights could be booked up.

□ Traffic around Botanic Gardens, Marriott and Essenwood roads, the Playhouse and City Hall – where functions will be held – will also be disrupted.

□ A possible shortage of accommodation for out-of-town visitors because the city's main hotels will be fully booked.

□ A lack of information on exact times of events due to the tight security surrounding the conference.

"Co-operation and patience are the keywords," the chamber said. "This is an opportunity which could turn things around for the region and it must not be lost."

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Great Mandela

Welcome

We'll not forget your support during our struggle,

Madiba tells islanders

DAILY NEWS
03-07-93

The residents of the Caribbean islands - former slaves from Africa - regard Mr Mandela as a hero.

PATRICIA ZENGERLE,
of Reuters, reports from Castries, St Lucia.

CROWDS shouted "Welcome" and schoolchildren waved flags as President Nelson Mandela began a visit yesterday to promote trade and thank Caribbean people for supporting the struggle against apartheid.

"We will not forget that this region was one of the staunchest activists supporting us in our anti-apartheid campaign," he told reporters after arriving at St Lucia's Sir George Charles Airport.

"I am here to express this appreciation directly to the people of Caricom," he said.

Mr Mandela was scheduled to attend the heads of government summit of the Caribbean Community (Caricom), the region's 15-member economic alliance, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary this week.

The residents of St Lucia and many of the Caribbean nations are descendants of African slaves brought to the islands to work on British and French plantations, and regard Mr Mandela as a hero.

He was greeted at the airport by St Lucia's governor-general, Pearllette Louisy, and Prime Minister Kenny Anthony and members of his cabinet. A band played while the schoolchildren waved the blue St Lucian flag and Mr Mandela walked along a fence to greet cheering residents.

"I am very happy indeed to be

here because our trade is growing at a very fast rate," Mr Mandela said. He said South Africa's exports to the Caribbean had doubled between 1996 and 1997.

"It is absolutely necessary for us to extend this part of our trade."

Mr Mandela spent the rest of yesterday resting at his hotel and meeting privately with Caricom leaders.

Today the Caricom summit was scheduled to relocate from St Lucia's capital, Castries, to Mr Mandela's hotel in Soufriere, on the southeast coast, for private meetings with the president.

St Lucia lies between St Vincent and Martinique in the Windward Islands of the eastern Caribbean. The 616 square-kilometre nation is home to 145 000 people.

Embassy

During his visit to St Lucia, Mr Mandela also was scheduled to visit with schoolchildren and make a public address. He was expected to announce that South Africa would establish an embassy in the Caribbean, likely in Jamaica, whose late prime minister, Michael Manley, was one of his most devoted supporters throughout his 25-year imprisonment during the fight against apartheid.

Mr Mandela, who turns 80 this month, is in his last year in office. He has been spending the year travelling the globe to win international friends and influence for his country.

Besides the Caribbean trip, he has visited, or plans to visit, Europe, Southeast Asia and Latin America.

Abiola free soon, says wife

Abuja: Moshood Abiola, Nigeria's best-known political prisoner and the presumed winner of presidential elections in 1993, will probably be freed in the coming days, one of his wives has said.

"We have every reason to believe he will be freed any moment from now," Doyin Abiola, who manages Abiola's newspaper group, said.

Mrs Abiola also said she had met Emeka Anyaoku, the secretary-general of the Commonwealth of former British colonies, since his meeting with her husband earlier this week. But she gave no further details.

In an new development the Nigerian junta named a new chief of general staff on Friday to replace the general who had previously held what is effectively the country's No 2 position - but was sentenced to death for allegedly plotting a coup.

General Oladipyo Diya, once

right-hand man to Nigeria's late dictator, General Sani Abacha, was sentenced to death in April along with five other people for the alleged December plot.

On Friday, Rear Admiral Mike Akhigbe, the chief of naval staff, was named to replace Diya. Akhigbe notably is a Christian from southern Nigeria, promoted in a military that is overwhelmingly made up of Muslim northerners.

It is seen as part of the Junta's strategy to create a better atmosphere for eventual elections.

But other reports suggest Abiola's release could be delayed by the refusal of his supporters to believe he has abandoned his claim to the country's presidency, government officials said.

They said no action could be taken until security was tightened to prevent possible demonstrations over the release of the 60-year-old tycoon, jailed in 1994 for declaring himself president on the basis of an annulled vote the previous year



MOSHOOD ABIOLA

which he is widely believed to have won.

"The government is not happy with the uncomplimentary comments of the various leaders of pro-democracy groups.

"Their comments indicate that they will mastermind violent protests if Abiola is not made presi-

dent," one senior government official said in Abuja.

"Abiola should definitely be released very soon, but I can assure you that these comments have not helped matters at all," the official said.

Opposition groups have reacted angrily to the possibility of a delay in the release, recalling that United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan had said on Thursday Abiola had told him he was not "naive" enough to think he could leave detention and be made president.

Political analysts said any plan to restore civilian rule to be announced by new ruler General Abdulsalam Abubakar would be given a huge credibility boost by the release of Abiola, once he publicly denounces his presidential claim.

But political activists based mostly in Abiola's southwest of the ethnically-divided country of 104 million said they did not believe he could possibly renounce the claim

and had no right to do so without first consulting with them.

Government sources say Abubakar, a northerner, is likely to announce soon a new plan to restore democracy to the country by January next year.

This would replace a widely criticised programme drawn up by late dictator Sani Abacha, who died suddenly last month, which included new presidential elections in which he would have been the only candidate.

World leaders have shown a great deal more faith in Abubakar, a 56-year-old career soldier, than they did in Abacha, who was condemned abroad for abusing human rights and democratic freedoms.

A high-level delegation sets off from the United States, Nigeria's biggest trading partner, this weekend to further encourage Abubakar, who has already freed more than 30 well-known political prisoners.

The European Union sent an envoy last week. - Reuters

THE SUNDAY TRIBUNE
05.07.98

Nigeria set to free political prisoners, says Annan

ABUJA: Apparently moving to polish Nigeria's long-tarnished reputation internationally, the military government will release all political prisoners, including the country's leading opposition figure, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan has said.

The concession, which would free at least 250 prisoners, is the latest sign that General Abdul-

salam Abubakar is making a concerted effort to break from the harsh policies of his predecessor, the late General Sani Abacha.

"I'm leaving Nigeria with the stage set for the release of all political detainees," Mr Annan said yesterday at the end of his four-day visit to the oil-rich but impoverished country.

"The government will make

an announcement at the appropriate time."

Foremost among Nigeria's political prisoners is Moshood Abiola, the apparent winner of presidential elections in 1993 that were later annulled. He was arrested a year after the vote when he declared himself president.

Mr Annan said he had met Chief Abiola and that the oppo-

sition leader had decided to relinquish his claim to the presidency and co-operate with Nigeria's junta in making a peaceful transition to democracy.

"I found him more realistic than some of us outside. Chief Abiola realises that a lot has changed," Mr Annan said, adding that Chief Abiola was in good health. Chief Abiola's pri-

ority is to rebuild his life after more than four years in prison and then he will assess his political support.

Chief Abiola has plenty of rebuilding to do. His fortune and his personal life have suffered deeply during his imprisonment. Two of his many wives have died - one in an assassination-style slaying - and his enormous business empire has

largely collapsed.

The visit by Mr Annan is itself a sign of the widespread hope that Nigeria will reform itself.

Mr Annan, a Ghanaian, is the highest-profile diplomat to meet the government since Gen Abacha executed leading playwright and activist Ken Saro-Wiwa in November 1995, provoking international outrage. - Sapa-AP



MOSHOOD ABIOLA
'Prepared to co-operate'

DAILY NEWS
03 OCT 98

ABIOLA'S RELEASE SEEN TO BE CLOSER

US mission

arrives in

The
Mercury
02-07-98

Nigeria today

Abuja

A HIGH-LEVEL United States mission arrives in Nigeria today amid expectations that it will persuade opposition politician Moshood Abiola to be released.

US embassy officials said Under-Secretary of State Mr Thomas Pickens would arrive in Abuja late today before meeting military ruler Abubakar tomorrow.

The visit, a remodelled version of one turned down by military dictator Sani Abacha before his death last month, aims to encourage respect for human rights and discuss ways of putting Africa's most populous nation on a course to democracy.

"It is the latest sign of Nigeria's rapid reintegration with a world community that shunned the oil-producing country of 104 million under Gen Abacha as a pariah for its failure to reform legislation and should be seen in the context of Abacha's determination to end Nigeria's isolation by the international community," a senior foreign ministry said yesterday.

Gen Abubakar has broken with Mr Abacha's iron rule by releasing many political prisoners and initiating talks with interest groups on a programme to restore the oil-producing country to civilian rule, winning plaudits at home and abroad.

But a key factor in the reform process is freedom for former presidential contender Abiola, which officials say could

use to believe that he has abandoned his claim to the presidency.

Mr Abiola was jailed in 1994 for declaring himself president on the basis of an annulled vote the previous year which he is widely believed to have won.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan at the end of a four-day visit last Thursday, during which he met Mr Abiola, quoted the 60-year-old tycoon as saying he was not "naive" enough to expect he would be made president if released.

Mr Abiola's supporters, who want him to head a national unity government to oversee transition to civil rule, have refused to accept the implied renunciation of his claim.

Freedom

The government-owned Sunday Times reported that the government was delaying the politician's release, which it said was planned for last week.

"Abiola's release will ultimately depend on assurances that his actions after freedom will be conducive to the government's programme of returning the country to democratic rule," the newspaper said.

While world leaders who have embraced Gen Abubakar's reforms insist on Mr Abiola's release, they appear to be less enthusiastic about his claims to the presidency and seem to be ready to endorse a new programme if it will lead eventually to credible democratic rule.

World awaits Abiola release

THE INDEPENDENT ON SATURDAY 04-07-98

Nigerian detainee's freedom imminent

NIGERIAN officials said yesterday the release of celebrated political detainee Mr Moshood Abiola was imminent only because he had agreed to give up his claim to the presidency.

United Nations secretary-general Mr Kofi Annan said yesterday: "I am convinced that General Abdulsalam Abubakar is determined to return Nigeria to democratic rule in the shortest possible time."

But backers of Abiola said they did not believe he had renounced his claim to the presidency.

They said Annan's remark on Thursday - that Abiola had said he was not "naive" enough to believe he could leave detention and become president - had caused a great deal of confusion within opposition ranks.

"I don't see where in the statement Kofi Annan stated categorically that Abiola had renounced his mandate, and he certainly couldn't have done it without consulting his supporters,"

said Mr Abraham Adesanya, leader of the opposition National Democratic Coalition.

"Chief Abiola has been asked to prepare his bags and tidy up his things," one senior government official said in Abuja after the ruling military council had met.

The 60-year-old Muslim tycoon was locked away in 1994 for proclaiming himself president on the basis of a 1993 vote.

Anulled

The elections, which Abiola is widely believed to have won, have been at the heart of political confusion in Nigeria since they were annulled by the previous military government.

Government officials said it was only after meeting Annan and Commonwealth Secretary-General Mr Emeka Anyaoku that Abiola had considered giving up his claim.

Anyaoku told the BBC after his

Nigeria trip that he had detected "a new mood" in the country.

Foreign countries were quick to congratulate Abubakar's regime after Annan said prisoners would be freed, a stark contrast to the condemnation heaped on the oil-producing country under dictator General Sani Abacha, who died on June 8.

The United States said it would send a high-level mission over the weekend to meet Abubakar and encourage him in his promise to restore democracy to the west African state, which has been ruled by soldiers for all but 10 years since independence from Britain in 1960.

Abubakar has tried to make a clean break with Abacha's way of government and has been sacking advisers who were particularly close to the former strongman. He has also taken fuel imports out of the hands of Abacha's cronies.

What still eludes Abubakar is putting in place a credible plan to restore civilian rule. - Reuters

AFRICAfocus

Nigeria to free political prisoners

THE Nigerian government has agreed to free all political prisoners and an announcement will soon be made, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan said on Thursday.

"The government has agreed to release all political prisoners and I believe that the announcement will be made at the appropriate time," said Annan.

The statement came after intense speculation that the junta, newly headed by General Abdulsalam Abubakar, could free key political prisoner Mr Moshood Ablola, the presumed winner of presidential elections held and annulled by the military in 1993.

Refugees: The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in Namibia has shelved the repatriation of Angolan refugees after reports of renewed clashes between warring factions in their country.

"The current situation in Angola has made us take a step backward," Ms Martha



Mutlifa, UNHCR Assistant Programme Officer, said. The UNHCR official said due to political unrest in Angola, the refugee body was also discouraging voluntary repatriation of refugees.

Angolan peace: French President Jacques Chirac ended his tour of Southern African this week promising to help Angola if it tried to conclude a deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Angolan President Eduardo dos Santos told a news conference he had asked Mr Chirac to urge the IMF to treat Angola with understanding and flexibility. He said this would help the peace process.

Survival: A decision by Botswana to remove fences on its border with Namibia will improve the survival chances of rare southern African animals, said the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). The endangered African wild dog and roan antelope are two species that will likely benefit from the move to tear down 30 kilometers of fences that blocked their migratory routes, WWF said in a statement.

Kaunda resigns: Former Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda will leave party politics and will inform the central committee of his United National Independence Party (Unip) of his decision today. Yesterday Kaunda said he had decided to leave partisan politics to concentrate on national and international matters.

His retirement would not in any way compromise him from criticising the government or Unip on issues of national importance, Kaunda said.

Kongo clash: Clashes between troops and tribesmen seeking a "Kongo kingdom" have claimed at least eight lives in the first such unrest in Kinshasa since Mr Laurent Kabila seized power.

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