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# Leaked memo deepens Kenya crisis

By William Wallis and Michael Holman in London and Krishna Guha in Washington

A confidential memo from the World Bank's Kenya office that supports President Mwai Kibaki's claim of victory in the country's disputed elections plunged the Washington-based lender into controversy on Wednesday.

The leaked January 1 briefing note, originating from Colin Bruce, the World Bank's country director in Nairobi, lays out the case for accepting Mr Kibaki's victory on the basis of "oral briefings and documents from senior [United Nations Development Programme] officials" who "monitored the overall electoral process".

The memo claims that "the considered view of the UN is that the Electoral Commission of Kenya announcement of a Kibaki win is correct".

However, Michele Montas, a spokeswoman for the UN secretary-general, denied that the UN had adopted that position. UNDP officials said they had neither monitored the elections nor provided any assessment suggesting a Kibaki victory.

Given the widespread irregularities reported in last month's elections, the leaked briefing note is likely to trigger accusations that the institution, which lends heavily to Kenya, has lost its political objectivity.

European Union election observers, whom Mr Bruce criticised, on Wednesday stood by their conclusion that the election was impossible to call.

Mr Bruce's memo has created discomfort among some senior World Bank staff who fear the bank's analysis of the Kenyan crisis has been influenced by too close a relationship with Mr Kibaki. Mr Bruce, from Guyana, lives in a house owned by the Kibaki family. The bank said the tenancy was inherited from its previous country representative and was chosen on security grounds.

The World Bank has been criticised for maintaining its large development programme in Kenya in spite of evidence of high-level corruption in Mr Kibaki's government. The bank says its projects are vital for the country's poor.

Mr Bruce told the Financial Times the bank had no position on the result of the elections and he "was simply reporting the information that was available to me to headquarters".

World Bank officials in Washington backed Mr Bruce and released a series of other communications from him, stating these showed his balanced approach to the elections. None of the other briefing notes regarding the Kenyan crisis revisits the question of whether Mr Kibaki won the election.

Marwan Muasher, head of external relations at the bank, said: “The bank does not take political positions. Neither Colin Bruce nor the bank has a position on Kibaki or [opposition leader Raila] Odinga.”

Separately, Kenya’s opposition ODM on Wednesday called for the withdrawal of Mr Bruce.

*Additional reporting by Barney Jopson in Nairobi and Harvey Morris at the UN*

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