

Kenyan anti-graft chief quits as sleaze reports mount
Mail and Guardian
07 February 2005

Kenyan anti-graft chief John Githongo on Monday resigned amid complaints from donors that the government is not doing enough to stamp out corruption in the East African nation, officials said in Nairobi.

Githongo, chief adviser on corruption of Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki, "tendered his resignation on [Monday] morning" from London, government spokesperson Alfred Mutua said.

"Githongo said that he was going for greener pastures," Mutua added, without giving details.

But Kenyan media, citing Githongo's resignation letter to Kibaki, reported that he said he "was no longer able to continue serving the government of Kenya owing to frustration".

His resignation comes less than a week after the British High Commissioner to Kenya, Edward Clay, mounted a renewed attack on what he called major corruption in Kenya and warned that Kibaki's government has failed to stop "massive looting" of public funds.

Kibaki's shaky alliance of opposition parties swept to power on an anti-corruption ticket in December 2002, but donors in the recent months have voiced concern over the emergence of new sleaze in the poverty-stricken East African nation.

Before his appointment in 2003 as the first-ever permanent secretary in charge of ethics and governance in Kibaki's office, Githongo served as the executive director of the Kenyan chapter of Transparency International, a global corruption watchdog.

Despite a raft of pledges to clear graft that was deep-rooted under retired president Daniel arap Moi (1978-2002), Kibaki's government has been criticised for failing to end the graft problem that found the country ostracised by the donor community and Bretton Woods lenders in the 1990s.

Clay, in a gloves-off speech to Kenyan journalists and editors last Wednesday, said Kibaki's government has lost "millions of dollars" in two years through 20 dubious contracts and crooked procurement ventures, which he handed over to the government.

The allegations drew angry reaction from government ministers, most of them challenging the high commissioner to prove them.

Twice last year, the straight-talking Clay accused ministers of involvement in "a gigantic looting spree", charging that the government's onslaught on sleaze was "evidently flawed", in remarks that sparked a diplomatic row between Nairobi and London.