

REPUBLIC OF MADAGASCAR



**ADDRESS OF H.E. MARC RAVALOMANANA,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MADAGASCAR**

General Assembly of the United Nations

**Wednesday, September 26, 2007
New York**

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PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MADAGASCAR
GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS
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Honourable Chairperson,
Mister Secretary General,
Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Each and every one of us knows that there is an urgent need for the globalization of responsibility. Each of us knows that this responsibility demands more than just goodwill. Each of us knows that the globalization of responsibility demands the creation of the right environment to reach these objectives. Every year, these objectives and measures are repeated at this General Assembly. Every year, the actions to fulfil them remain weak.

This is the fifth time I've taken part in this United Nation's General Assembly, and I must honestly tell you that I am very concerned about two things:

First, I am very concerned because national interests prevail over emergencies that affect us all. These emergencies are closely linked to common interests. It is in the interest of all of us to address them together.

Second, I am very concerned about the lack of seriousness. A lot of promises are made, but not a lot of promises are kept.

Today, we are confronted with two major challenges that could entail major disasters should we not take them seriously, and act quickly. These challenges must be the priority of priorities.

The first concerns climate change. The second is the development of Africa.

Imagine the impact on all the nations and all the people you represent, if the situation worsens.

All our national efforts will be ruined by earthquakes, ecological disasters and social disasters. Climate change creates and aggravates conflicts. The refugees and victims of climate change, will be the refugees and victims of wars and poverty.

We must act today to save the earth, or this earth won't be ours anymore.

On the other hand, imagine the impact on all nations and all people if the current situation improves. It will strengthen the confidence of nations and investors. If the world had an ecological balance, and if it were without poverty, there would be a considerable impact on political and social conflicts

The two challenges are bound together. Africa will have either a positive or a negative impact on the world climate with enormous repercussions. Our actions and our decisions will decide. The world climate will have either a positive or negative impact with enormous repercussions on the development of Africa. Again, our decisions and our actions will decide.

Africa only produces one percent of the world's solar energy. In Africa, the possibilities for new, clean forms of energy and for the reduction of CO₂ are enormous.

Madagascar could provide in some of the energy needs through the development of hydro energy. And, half of Madagascar could be re-forested. Our island, called the red island, could once again become known as the green island.

There is a strong link between the quality of the environment and poverty. Many bushfires are the result of poverty. And the destruction of the natural resources increases poverty.

It is necessary to quickly step out of this vicious cycle. Increased international help will limit the exploitation of natural resources by poor farmers.

In Madagascar, we have been planning our development strategies around "sustainability" for some years now.

Our vision is called "Madagascar, naturally!". It means that our natural resources and our people are our wealth. We will preserve our environment and increase its value by using it responsibly.

We are actively looking for international investment, but we believe that in the long run this won't mean much, unless we have national investors too. We can create added value - with success - by processing our natural products.

We are convinced that economic growth from the bottom up is the key to success. The most important message I gave to the Malagasy people at the beginning of my second term was the necessity of decentralization right down to the level of the "Fokontany ". Originally, the "Fokontany" was the traditional Malagasy village. We are trying our best to restore the balance between humans and nature.

This is a different approach. This is a Malagasy approach. This is an approach that encourages the Malagasy people to take their future into their own hands. This is not the approach of the donors. With this approach we strive to forge a partnership with the international community.

We have described all of this in detail in the MAP, the Madagascar Action Plan.

Read it, and you will see that we are already contributing to meeting the challenges I've mentioned. We are committing ourselves to protecting and cherishing the environment, to healing the injuries of the past, and to ending rampant climate change.

In the MAP we came up with a set of very ambitious goals. We do what we can, despite our limited resources.

But, we could do so much more if the international community helped us more.

We are thankful to the donors who have increased their financial assistance. But, as a whole, these efforts have fallen far short of our expectations, especially if we are to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. They are not even close to the promise of doubled aid to Africa. They are still far from honouring the numerous promises made here at the United Nations. They are far from addressing global challenges. The international approach to Africa lacks seriousness.

For a lot of members of the international community aid to Africa is still not a "success story". On average, results are poor. But, Africa is advancing as a continent. Not everywhere, but in an increasing number of countries. Once, Madagascar rated amongst the least effective countries. Today, we are an effective country.

Our economy has benefited from continuous economic growth. We had 5% economic growth 5 years ago, 6 percent over the last few years, and 7 percent in 2007. Poverty rates are dropping dramatically. In 2002, 80% of our population was living in poverty, last year this rate stood at 67%.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Aid to Africa is as weak as ever. Africa can absorb so much more. And all countries would benefit from this.

The European Union is a good example of a lot of aid leading to great benefits for many countries.

I am convinced that Africa could advance much quicker if the international community and the African countries could come up with a new plan.

A Marshall Plan for Africa, I have suggested this repeatedly over the years and I'm saying it again: We need a Marshall Plan for Africa.

A crucial element to this plan should be a new partnership. I propose to you an "ecological partnership" between the industrialized countries and Africa.

Such a partnership could contribute substantially to finding real solutions to some of the climate problems, through a program of investment. Other important features would be nature conservation, and the preservation of our biodiversity.

I am convinced that Africa could be the supplier of clean energy, medicinal and industrial plants, as well as other natural products in the future. The world is bound to need more and more of these.

We feel that sustainable policies that emphasize protection and added value should be high on our agenda, and should be our commitment to the world. But remember, such policies are also in our own interest.

In Madagascar, cyclones destroy a large part of our harvests every year. They destroy houses. They kill people. The increase in the number and strength of those cyclones are hindering the whole process of development. Higher temperatures are reducing harvests, our unique biodiversity, and leads to more and more harmful bugs and illnesses.

All over Africa, we are already seeing the consequences of climate change. Droughts and floods are behind increased migration and serious conflicts.

An aggravation of climate change will not only bring fluxes of devastating waters on all continents, but also fluxes of refugees, and waves of social conflicts.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In short, the world needs Africa to solve the problem of climate change, and Africa needs a stable climate for lasting, sustainable development.

To achieve this globalization of responsibility will require dedicated leadership. We need leaders who can mobilize their people and get results – fast results, and big results.

At this time I want to congratulate the new Secretary General BAN KI-MOON. I wish you the best of success in this very important task. We in Africa look to the UN for dynamic leadership. You are our hope. May your leadership help us get results, the kind of results that bring peace and prosperity to Africa, and to the world!

Thank you.