



# MADAGASCAR



**61<sup>st</sup> SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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Address

by

H.E.Mr. Marc RAVALOMANANA

President of the Republic of Madagascar

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PERMANENT MISSION OF MADAGASCAR TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
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Madam President,  
Dear colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mister Secretary General,

I would like to pay tribute to you for what you have done. You were a great Secretary General. Thanks to your clear vision, your commitment and your open-mindedness, you have greatly contributed to the development of the United Nations and the promotion of Africa.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last year we discussed the Millennium Development Goals. It was clear that those goals could not be reached in sub-Saharan countries if we didn't make a concerted effort.

The initiative of the G8, the World Bank, the European Union and other donors seemed to constitute a good foundation for a profound change.

Have we noticed a profound change? I do not think so. The sad reality is that Africa receives less international assistance – per capita – than twenty years ago.

Let us be honest: The great ideas and goodwill expressed in words rarely go through the filters of structures and existing programs. Files on Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, the Palestine question, and the oil question have put Africa in the shade. It is a fact: Africa is not a priority for international authorities.

But I would like to remind you that we set the Millennium Development Goals together. They are common goals. Therefore, achieving those goals is also a common task.

I would like to remind you that when we deal with issues, we also write the destiny of hundreds of millions of human beings. The decisions that we take affect hundreds of thousands of children. Where is this fervent desire to deliver on our promises to help children? That is the paradox between what we preach and what we do.

I would like to remind you that the task of this community is to avoid crises instead of dealing with crises. This institution should not be a place for “firefighters” but a place for strategists.

And I would like to emphasize that this idea of “one world”, the foundation of globalization, cannot take us towards a fair and peaceful future as long as many poor countries are still marginalized. To join the international community, we want the same entrance ticket as the European Union gave to East European countries.

We should all be on the same boat. However, many developing countries are still struggling behind, swimming hard trying to catch the boat. How can we get out of this calamitous situation ?

The Millennium Development Goals must remain the basis of our discussions and our actions, even if their achievement becomes more and more difficult.

Industrialized countries have asked us to develop visions for our respective countries and to prepare road maps in order to achieve them. They have asked us to specify the Millennium Development Goals for our respective countries. They have asked us to increase our absorption capacity.

All that is fair and understandable. However, the role of industrialized countries is not to play the referee, assess the players, and distribute red cards. All countries, developed and developing alike, must “play” together. We must act together and keep the same goal in mind.

That's why I have decided to develop a new strategy in Madagascar that we call MAP or «Madagascar Action Plan ».

This plan was discussed throughout the twenty-two regions of Madagascar with representatives from private and public organizations, to create a sound basis with a view to achieving our Vision “Madagascar, naturellement”, and the Millennium Development Goals.

The MAP has also been discussed with the donor community. I told them: The MAP is based on our Vision and on the Millennium Development Goals that we all set together. We should not be limited by existing means. We should mobilize all the necessary means to achieve those goals instead.

I told donors: "It is our common plan." We decide together how many men and women we want and can "pull" out of poverty. How many children can have a better education, and how many children we can save by providing them with safe drinking water and vaccines.

Together, we have to answer those questions because we have to deal with global tasks. We have to deal with common tasks. Hunger, misery, and disasters are part of those issues which do not know borders. Therefore, they are part of our shared responsibility.

We must change the approach we used in the past, based on division. We must admit that the tasks are too formidable to be carried out by weak people, to whom a new burden is given.

We must realize that we deal with goals and measures, which we must take on together, according to our capacities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Unquestionably, international assistance in favor of the development of Africa must be doubled or tripled in the short term.

Donors must deliver on their promises in the short term if we really want to revive the economies of African countries.

We always wonder why sub-Saharan Africa has not experienced economic growth in the last few years. Certainly, there are various reasons. We can cite a few examples, such as internal conflicts, lack of good governance, and instability.

But the reduction of help, per capita, during the last twenty years is one of the main reasons causing slow economy growth.

We have even heard proposals for further reduction of international assistance so that developing countries become much more independent quickly.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a fundamental misunderstanding. To become independent developing countries need more international assistance. Greater support means the shortest way towards independence. The more we invest in the areas of education, infrastructure, and health, and the more strengthened economic growth will be.

And the more strengthened economic growth is, the quicker the independence of developing countries will be effective.

Investments in education, health, infrastructure etc. are always conditions for foreign direct investments. They cannot be replaced by private investments.

Look at the results of The Marshall Plan. Look at the huge investments of the European Union in the new member states. They have been a big success.

The question of absorption capacity has been discussed. Like all developing countries, we, too, have had problems. They are problems of cooperation between national and international partners. After all, if there is lack of capacities, it is the result of the lack of support.

The question of capacities must never be the determining factor for the volume of support. When there is a lack of capacities in an area, it is necessary to strengthen it. If human resources are not yet available at national level, it is necessary to use the services of international experts and at the same time reinforce national capacities.

In this context, I would like to add a few words on "country ownership":

It is true that we, in developing countries, we know our problems very well. Therefore, we are ready to take on our responsibilities. The programming of policies and actions must be the responsibility of nationals. The programs of the donors have to be integrated with national programs.

But it is also true that we are not always aware of our weaknesses. We are not in line with all the values, rules, standards, and procedures which are acknowledged in most industrialized countries.

Many times, our fellow citizens do not appreciate the true worth of good governance.

The transfer of the rules of good governance, standards of education, health, and infrastructure into our culture and our policies is essential. The transfer of knowledge is as urgent as the transfer of funds.

We need not only technical knowledge. The transfer of knowledge must also include values and the concept of professionalism.

Let us put our capacities together. What is at stake is too important. It is necessary to use all our capacities at once. Effectiveness must be the rule. Good cooperation between national and international experts is crucial to success.

And let us be more realistic. Let us be more pragmatic. The percentage of international assistance spent on studies is too high. Most of those studies are not put into practice. They just repeat what previous studies have already found out.

I recommend a more effective decentralization so that financial assistance gets to the grass roots.



In fact, the financing mechanism is often slow and sometimes complex. It resembles a tortuous, stony and "porous" way.

From time to time we always ask the same question: How to better structure international assistance? We wonder which transfer of funds for which area and with which measures is the most important.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I assure you that there is no simple answer. Each country, each region, each area requests a different answer. Theoretical discussions will not help us.

However, there is a foundation that is crucial for development: it is confidence.

If the people do not feel confident, they will not contribute to development. If international firms do not feel confident, they will not come.

Confidence comes from opening up to the outside world, from stability, from transparency. Good governance and democracies are also crucial.

I can assure you that Madagascar, my Government, and myself will hold free and fair elections on December third of this year.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

During the session of the United Nations last year opinion was unanimous about the urgency of increasing international assistance in quantitative and qualitative terms to reach the Millennium Development Goals. We should act accordingly.

North America, Europe and most countries in Asia and South America have experienced an era of prosperity and progress. For them there is now a good chance of living a decent life –and living until the age of eighty.

People in Africa do not have that chance.

I call upon you to develop and adopt a more dynamic and determined approach in favor of Africa. Chances will be more balanced and the world will be more equitable.

We have often noticed that industrialized countries can react quickly and launch large-scale operations if their vital interests are at stake. We wish the same dynamic approach for Africa now because the basic needs of our people must be met. It is in the interest of Africa. It is also in the best interest of humanity. A prosperous Africa is an asset for the world.

Thank you