



# MADAGASCAR



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

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Mister President,  
Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,  
Mister Secretary General,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Eight years ago in this very hall, we, the leaders of the world, officially agreed upon the Millennium Development Goals. Three years ago, we reviewed these goals and progress made thus far. We realized that these goals were in danger of not being attained by the year 2015, and we all acknowledged that only through a considerable increase in our efforts would we be able to achieve the MDGs.

Have we been able to deliver on these promises and commitments? Unfortunately, I'm afraid not. In fact, the realities of today are far more complex than they were three years ago.

We are facing a global food crisis, a global economic crisis, and a global security crisis with war and political hostilities spreading throughout the globe.

In spite of efforts to reduce the divisions between the rich and the poor, the progress we've made so far on the MDGs has fallen short of the targets we established.

These global crises are of such importance that they are threatening to push the Millennium Development Goals into the margins of our agenda. If we allowed this to happen, this would be a major mistake. We have to remain focused on the achievement of the MDGs. In doing so, we will also contribute to solving some of these other complex global issues.

I appreciate so much the aid and assistance provided by donors and international organizations. These institutions and their programs are making a difference in the lives of the people of Madagascar and the lives of millions of people throughout Africa.

In Madagascar, for example, under-five mortality rates have dropped from 159 per thousand children to 94 per thousand. Primary school enrollment has increased from 67% to more than 92%. A million Malagasy have risen out of poverty in the last five years. All this would not have been possible without the support of the international community.

Unfortunately, however, the development assistance process is flawed and the aid that donors and international organizations provide is not enough.

The target of 0.7 percent was agreed upon to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Earlier this month, the United Nations released a report which said that most of the wealthy donor nations have failed to deliver on promises to help the world's poorest countries. The same report said that donor countries must increase aid by \$18 billion dollars a year in order to keep their pledge to provide \$50 billion dollars by 2010.

In Africa, we bear the consequences for what was promised but not delivered. Poor countries cannot break the cycle of poverty, families have difficulties feeding themselves, people still have very limited access to safe drinking water and proper sanitation.

I call upon all donor countries to honor your promises and to demonstrate leadership by explaining to your people why supporting the MDGs and the fight against poverty is a moral obligation and is so essential for creating a more stable and peaceful world.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are all aware of the current world food crisis. It is a heavy burden for us to bear, as it is for other countries, and poses many new challenges.

The global food crisis is partly the result of domestic agricultural subsidies and tariff protection practices by developed countries, which for many years have discouraged agricultural production in developing countries.

In Africa we are in a "food trap." Because we have such low agricultural output, we are dependent on the global marketplace to feed our people. With commodity prices soaring, we cannot afford the basic food items needed to survive. We are in a real crisis. Higher food prices are pushing more people into absolute poverty.

The international community needs to take urgent and coordinated action to combat the negative impacts of increasing food prices on poor and vulnerable countries. Overall trade policies must foster food security for all.

Developed countries must reform their agricultural subsidy policies and minimize the strategies and practices that increase volatility of international prices.

The international community must also help African countries to expand agriculture and food production, and to increase investment in agriculture and the infrastructure needed for rural development.

The strategies pursued must address the need for environmental management, sustainable development and crop resilience. Because of the impact of global climate change, maintaining healthy biodiversity is critical to sustaining future production performance.

The small subsistence farmer is key to the development of Africa. 80% of the people participate in small farm production. Our farmers must be supported through training, access to finance and equipment, and with mechanisms for marketing and distribution.

They must participate in, and benefit from, a new model of agricultural production, economic development, and environmental management. In this regard, I appreciate very much the approach of the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO).

I would like to tell you about what we are doing in Madagascar to address the challenge of food security.

Our intention is to make Madagascar's agriculture more productive, more sustainable, and more open to innovation and to entrepreneurship, such as through the Future Farmers of Madagascar initiative.

For example, we are promoting the widespread use of the System of Rice Intensification (SRI), an eco-friendly and pro-people method developed in Madagascar in the 1980s. SRI promotion is an important part of Madagascar's recently launched "natural revolution."

A natural revolution focuses on sustaining our natural resources and maintaining an ecological balance. It respects the soil and respects the people.

For the moment, however, we are trying to keep the domestic rice price down at a level where poor people - who constitute more than 70% of our population - can afford to buy this staple food of Madagascar.

In addition to this very critical food crisis, we are confronted with a number of other important challenges: climate change, increasing energy prices and fuel shortages, unpredictable financial markets and other threats to our peace and security.

What are the consequences of all these challenges and threats?

First, they have a severe impact on the education, health and well-being of our population. In short, they have a very negative impact on our development as a whole.

Second, these other challenges are now competing, in a sense, with the Millennium Development Goals. Many of the resources that have been dedicated to achieving the MDGs are now being directed elsewhere. They are used to reconstruct countries destroyed by wars and to rehabilitate societies faltering as a result of social conflicts.

They are also used to stabilize food markets, to meet energy demands and to tackle climate change.

I understand that countries devastated by wars and other armed conflicts, by environmental catastrophes or by food shortages need assistance. I fully understand and support reforestation efforts and the need for new hydro-energy plants.

What I do not understand, however, is that these challenges sometimes offer reasons for countries to abdicate on their promises of doubled aid for education, health and infrastructure in order to achieve the MDGs in developing countries, especially in Africa.

For this reason, I have repeatedly stressed the importance of international assistance – especially the need to increase, improve and better coordinate this assistance – if donors are to meet their previously agreed pledges.

There are many links between the MDGs and these political, economic, environmental and other challenges I have mentioned. Therefore, more investment towards the achievement of the MDGs will contribute to addressing these other crises.

In fact, improving the situation of the poorest of the poor is one of the best means to deal with them.

One has to realize, however, that these challenges will not be solved by simply shifting means from one problem to the other. It should be understood that other challenges require additional resources and better coordination of efforts.

Africa has been hit harder than any other continent by the food crisis, by higher energy prices, by environmental degradation, by diseases and by social and political destabilization.

*I would therefore like to reiterate that we need a new Marshall Plan for Africa.*

It seems that many world leaders as well as the public in developed countries have forgotten or neglected the Millennium Development Goals. We cannot fill one group's basket with the advantages of globalization while we empty the basket of another through the cost of globalization. It increasingly appears that domestic interests are serviced at the cost of international needs. The outcome of the latest round of the World Trade Organization proved this.

An important obstacle to making progress in developing countries and to achieving the MDGs is the lack of shared decision-making power in international institutions and global forums.

I would like to see a United Nations that can mobilize resources and political will to tackle the toughest of problems – and succeed.

I am optimistic. I believe that we can turn the situation around. I appeal to you as leaders of the world. Everyone needs to contribute to the international basket: more goodwill, more motivation, more technical assistance, more coordinated efforts and much more financial resources.

If you are committed, if we are all committed, we can confront these crises and we can still reach the Millennium Development Goals. We can win this!

The recent TICAD 4 provides an encouraging and promising example of our partners' commitment and willingness to advance the development agenda of Africa and to achieve the MDGs.

More and more foundations – such as Gates, Rockefeller, MacArthur, Better U, Clinton and others – have been playing a critical role in Africa. All these initiatives are much appreciated and very welcome.

Madagascar has embarked on the path of transformation.

To accelerate and better coordinate the development process and to make a quantum leap, we have created the Madagascar Action Plan, or MAP. The MAP is a bold and ambitious, five-year plan, which aims to promote *rapid growth*, lead to the *reduction of poverty*, and ensure that the country develops in response to the *challenges of globalization* and in accordance with the national vision – *Madagascar Naturally* – and with the UN Millennium Development Goals.

We have mobilized the whole population to implement the Madagascar Action Plan. The active participation of the population strengthens its sense of national pride and country ownership.

To help us move further on this path and if we are to achieve the MDGs in our country, the international community will have to double its efforts in Madagascar. But we recognize our own responsibilities as well: to build trust with our partners, to strengthen our capacities, to promote democracy and good governance, to take the future of our country in our own hands.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I urge all of us to share the responsibility and to assume the leadership for achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. I am calling for a transformation in our thinking and in our actions so that we move towards a vibrant Africa, a continent of hope and opportunity.

I thank you all for your attention.