

2005 WORLD SUMMIT

HIGH-LEVEL PLENARY MEETING | 14-16 SEPTEMBER 2005

**H.E. MR. OMAR BONGO ONDIMBA****CO-CHAIRPERSON OF THE
HIGH-LEVEL PLENARY MEETING**

The youngest in a family of twelve children, H.E. Mr. Omar Bongo Ondimba, President of Gabon, was born on 30 December 1935 in Lewai, a town of the Haut-Ogooué province in South-East Gabon.

After his primary and secondary education in Brazzaville, the then capital of French Equatorial Africa, he started working at the Post and Telecommunications Public Services, before starting his military training. This training allowed him to serve as a sub-lieutenant and then as a lieutenant in the Air Force, successively in Brazzaville, Bangui and Fort Lamy (presently N'djamena).

Shortly after Gabon's independence in 1960, the young Omar Bongo, still known as Albert Bernard, before his conversion to Islam in 1973, started his political career, alongside the first President of the Republic of Gabon, Mr. Léon Mba, initially at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and then at the Office of the Chief of Staff, where he became Director in 1961. President Léon Mba, who appreciated his strong work capacities and his boldness, appointed him as his right-hand man, allowing Omar Bongo to become a member of the Government as early as 1965.

He first served as a Ministerial delegate at the Presidency of the Republic, then as Minister in charge of National Defense and Coordination, and subsequently as Minister of Information and Tourism.

In 1966, he was appointed Vice President of the Republic. During the Presidential election of March 1967, President Léon Mba, who had made him his fellow candidate during the campaign, was reelected. After the death of the Father of the Independence in November 1967, Omar Bongo Ondimba succeeded him as President of Gabon, according to the provisions of the Constitution.

Successively reelected in 1973, 1980 and 1986, President Bongo Ondimba received a majority of votes in Gabon during the first multi-party presidential election in 1993 and during the second one in 1998.

Married with children, the President of Gabon has received numerous high distinctions for his political action and his commitment to peace in Africa and in the world, such as: the Grand Cross of the Order of St. Michael and St. George (Great Britain), the Grand Cross of the National Order of Merit (France), the Grand Cross of the National Legion of Honour (France), the Grand Collar of the Sovereign Order of Merit of Malta and many other national Grand Crosses from various African countries, including Cameroon, Senegal, Niger, Chad, Guinea and Central African Republic.