

## **Biography of Mr. Jean Ping, President of the 59th Session of the General Assembly**

H.E. Mr. Jean Ping, President of the fifty-ninth session of the United Nations General Assembly, has been *Ministre d'Etat*, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and la Francophonie of the Gabonese Republic since 1999 and a Member of Parliament since 1996.

A career diplomat, Mr. Ping began his professional life at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris, where he was recruited in 1972 as an international civil servant in the Sector for External Relations and Cooperation. From 1978 to 1984, he served as Permanent Delegate of the Gabonese Republic to UNESCO. His diplomatic and political experience led to his appointment, in 1984, as Director of the Cabinet of the President of Gabon, a position he held until 1990, when he was elevated to the post of Minister of Information. In that capacity, he also had jurisdiction over postal services and telecommunications, tourism, reform of the parapublic sector and parliamentary issues and served additionally as Government Spokesperson.

Throughout the 1990s, Mr. Ping successively held a variety of appointments at the ministerial level, including Minister of Mines, Energy and Water Resources and deputy minister in the Ministry of Finance, Economy, Budget and Privatization. Later, he was Minister of Planning, Environment and Tourism, a position he held until his appointment, in 1999, as *Ministre d'Etat*, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and la Francophonie.

Mr. Ping, who has extensive experience in international and regional diplomacy, has headed his country's delegation at numerous sessions of the United Nations General Assembly, as well as at international conferences and summits, including those of UNESCO, the World Bank, the Organization of African Unity, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, of which he was President in 1993. Mr. Ping also led Gabon's delegation at such diverse forums as summits of the International Organization of la Francophonie, top-level conferences between France and African countries, conferences between the African, Caribbean and Pacific States and the European Union, the China-Africa Forum on Cooperation, the Third Tokyo International Conference on African Development and conferences between the United States and Africa organized in the framework of the African Growth and Opportunity Act. At the regional and subregional levels, Mr. Ping has headed delegations at conferences and summits of the Central African Customs and Economic Union, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, the Economic Community of Central African States and the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

Mr. Ping's distinguished 32-year career in government has been marked by diplomatic success, notably his contribution to the many efforts by the President of the Gabonese Republic, El Hadj

Omar Bongo Ondimba, to restore peace and stability in Central Africa, in particular in the Republic of the Congo, Chad, the Central African Republic and Sao Tome and Principe.

A recipient of numerous honours in recognition of his outstanding career and service to his country, both at home and abroad, Mr. Ping has been awarded Gabon's medals of Commander of the Equatorial Star, Grand Officer of the Equatorial Star, Commander of the Maritime Merit Order and Commander of the Gabonese National Order of Merit. France has conferred on Mr. Ping the distinction of Commander of the Legion of Honour and of Officer of the Order of the Pleiad and the Order of la Francophonie. Mr. Ping also has been awarded Portugal's Grand Cross of the Order of Merit.

A member of the French National Association of Doctors of Economics (ANDESE), Mr. Ping holds a doctorate in economics from the University of Paris I (Panthéon-Sorbonne) and has received honorary doctorates from the Institute of Diplomacy of China and the Institute of African Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow.

Born on 24 November 1942 in Omboué, in the Etimbé region of Gabon, Mr. Ping is the author of several publications. He is married with children.