



Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General and his wife, Yoo Soon Teak, at Maison Commune des Nations Unies Andraharo Antananarivo, on 10 May 2016

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL'S ADDRESS TO THE JOINT CONGRESS OF SENATE AND ASSEMBLY, INCLUDING LAUNCH OF THE REPORT ON THE COST OF HUNGER IN MADAGASCAR

Antananarivo, 11 May 2016



BAN KI-MOON, UN SECRETARY-GENERAL. BEHIND: HONORE RAKOTOMANANA,

PRESIDENT OF SENAT (left); JEAN MAX RAKOTOMAMONJY, PRESIDENT OF ASSEMBLY (right) - [CLICK HERE TO WATCH THE VIDEO](#)

Manao ahoana tompoko! ["Good morning."]

Faly aho tonga eto Madagasikara. Misaotra indrindra amin'ny fandraisana mahafam-po. [I am delighted to be in Madagascar. Thank you for your warm welcome.]

I thank the Government and people of Madagascar for their warm welcome to this beautiful country.

I am deeply honoured to address this Joint Congress of the Senate and Assembly.

It is especially rewarding to stand in this Parliament. Your elections last year represented an important milestone that ended five years of political crisis.

I commend the National Assembly for its hard work as the only operational chamber for two years. And I congratulate the Senate for its recent re-establishment.

You are making a fresh start at a critical time.

The world is embarking on the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Madagascar was among the record-setting number of countries that signed the Paris Agreement on climate change last month in New York. The total is now one hundred and seventy-seven.

I urge you to make the most of these opportunities by advancing towards the Sustainable Development Goals – and ratifying the Paris Agreement as quickly as possible.

Honourable members of Parliament,

Madagascar is at a crossroads.

I see huge challenges and even greater opportunities.

I am concerned about the widespread poverty.

Economic growth is weak. Unemployment is high.

Water access is among the worst in the world.

Only three in ten children here complete primary school.

They should be learning in classrooms – not labouring in jobs.

Some one in three young Malagasy cannot read.

I welcome the Government's adoption of a National Youth Policy last year.

The United Nations stands with you in carrying it out. My Youth Envoy, Mr. Ahmad Alhendawi, is your bridge to the United Nations.

Together we will strive to empower the youth of this great country.

We stand ready to support all people in Madagascar.

Most communities here lack health clinics, clean water and other basic services. The majority of children never go to secondary school. And many people have no access to justice.

Natural disasters take a heavy toll. People suffer from cyclones, floods and locusts.

This Parliament has the democratic legitimacy to guide Madagascar in meeting the challenges ahead.

You can end the corruption that has weakened Malagasy society.

You can help fight the illegal trafficking of natural treasures.

In this way, you can be fully accountable to the voters.

We gather in a beautiful building. It is a sound structure.

But buildings do not make institutions strong – people do.

Resolute, courageous and principled individuals create history.

People across Madagascar look to you.

Farmers and fishermen, mothers and students, traders and taxi drivers, men and women – they all deserve full human rights and lasting progress.

Military operations can never excuse human rights violations – here or anywhere. There is no place for torture in our modern world, including in Madagascar. I urge you to end all rights violations, including mob justice and extrajudicial killings.

You have a duty to protect people's rights to freedom of the press, expression and peaceful assembly.

A vibrant civil society that can operate freely is essential to progress.

I applaud Madagascar for abolishing the death penalty. I commend the Government for setting up the Independent National Human Rights Commission. I urge you to operationalize it. And I count on you to activate the High Court of Justice, the National High Council for the Defence of Democracy and the Rule of Law, and other such institutions.

This will generate public trust and lay the foundation for collective progress.

Honourable Parliamentarians,

Today I call for dialogue and inclusiveness.

Malagasy are known for their fondness of the concept of *fihavanana* ("Fee-ha-va-nan"). This suggests friendship, kinship and interconnectedness. It encompasses a spirit of solidarity.

You have the opportunity to put this concept into practice.

His Excellency the President has committed to building a prosperous and modern nation.

The United Nations will support you in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, our plan for a life of dignity for all people.

As we advance to a better future, I encourage you to foster inclusion, greater reconciliation and participation. When you create a climate of trust, freedom and fairness, all people benefit.

Madagascar also needs to sustainably manage its wondrous biodiversity – and ensure that all people benefit from these riches.

This is one of the richest countries in the world in biodiversity. It is blessed with many natural resources. When you enable people to make the most of their potential, they can build a new future.

It is especially important to empower women. I hope you will work to end harmful traditional practices. And I urge you to consider special measures to increase women's political participation.

Excellencies,

Honourable Parliamentarians,

I thank the active network of female Parliamentarians here who champion the cause of nutrition.

Madagascar is a member of my Scaling Up Nutrition Movement.

I commend your commitment to improving nutrition.

Nutrition is about more than feeding people. It requires attention to health, agriculture, education, women's empowerment and water.

We also need to involve partners, including businesses, donors and members of civil society.

Today we officially launch the UN report on the cost of hunger in Madagascar.

It paints an alarming picture. Nearly one out of two children here suffer from stunting.

This is a tragedy for individuals and a disaster for development.

Undernutrition costs more than a billion and a half dollars each year in Madagascar. That is almost 15 per cent of GDP.

The human toll is immeasurable.

I encourage you to strengthen your commitment to ending undernutrition and allocate more resources to addressing this problem.

I hope you will define a National Minimum Package of Essential Nutritional Services – and a plan to scale it up.

The United Nations will be your unwavering partner.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The late Gisèle Rabesahala was a great daughter of Madagascar and an example to the world.

She went into politics when she was just 17. She struggled against colonialism and advocated for the poor. She became the first woman Minister in Madagascar.

She once said, “If we don’t know where we come from, we don’t know where we are going.”

I encourage you to heed these words, learn from your history and build a better future for all.

Misaotra betsaka tompoko! [“Thank you.”]