

**REPUBLIQUE GABONAISE**

**UNION – TRAVAIL – JUSTICE**



**United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development**

**Remarks by His Excellency,**

**Ali Bongo Ondimba**

**President of Gabon**

**Rio de Janeiro**

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Excellence Madame le Président de la Conférence ;

Excellences Mesdames et Messieurs les Chefs d'Etat et de  
Gouvernement ;

Excellence Monsieur le Président de l'Assemblée Générale des  
Nations Unies ;

Excellence Monsieur le Secrétaire Général des Nations Unies

Monsieur le Secrétaire Général de la Conférence ;

Mesdames et Messieurs ;

Le Gabon est honoré de prendre part à cette conférence  
historique.

Madame le Président Dilma Roussef, je vous félicite de son  
excellente organisation. Je remercie le Peuple brésilien et vous-  
même de l'accueil chaleureux qui a été réservé à ma délégation  
et moi-même.

Je félicite le Secrétaire Général des Nations Unis, le  
Secrétaire Général de la Conférence, et tous nos négociateurs  
qui ont œuvré pour que nous puissions, j'en suis sur, adopter  
une déclaration de consensus.

Je salue le rôle déterminant du Président Denis Sassou  
Nguesso, Président de la République du Congo, pour le travail  
accompli au nom de l'Afrique.

Madame le Président, Mesdames et Messieurs,

Il y a 20 ans ici à Rio, lors du Sommet de la Terre, le Président du Gabon, mon prédécesseur, disait, je cite:

***« En Afrique, la conscience de notre retard, notre désir de décoller à tout prix, et une forte incitation à le faire rapidement, nous ont conduits à laisser s'installer un système peu rationnel d'exploitation de nos richesses. Nous commençons seulement à en mesurer l'ampleur et les conséquences. »***

Madam President

This statement made by my predecessor remains highly relevant today!

Over the past twenty years, we have worked hard to advance the agenda set in Rio in 1992. Yet the commitment required from us all to adopt sustainable economic, social and environmental practices has not materialised.

Africa is about to achieve a long awaited renaissance. The challenges we face today feed a deep sense of urgency to act decisively. And we should not let our efforts of the past 20 years be undermined by environmental crises and economic and financial instability.

We are gathered again in Rio. Our task is to chart the new course for harmonious and sustainable development, integrating the fight against climate change, the preservation of natural assets, the development of green economies and the pursuit of social equity and poverty reduction.

Our Peoples, our Youth, all look up to us all to deliver on a renewed commitment and resolve to act.

Madam President

In 2009, the People of Gabon elected me on a programme in which sustainable development is the central tenant. At the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference I committed to pursue a low carbon development path in Gabon. In 2010, I agreed to implement the Nagoya treaty, which Gabon was the first country to formally ratify a few months later.

I came to Rio to contribute to our concerted action to advance sustainable development in a new and more practical way, on a par with the current and future challenges. Our actions should flow from our will to think globally and act collectively.

Madam President

Please allow me to bear witness to the efforts of my country.

Since Rio 1992, Gabon has endeavoured to create an institutional framework for sustainable development, with the conviction that our growth should be rooted in the responsible stewardship of our natural endowment.

On the legislative front, we adopted a Forestry Law in 2001, to make sustainable management plans obligatory for all forestry concessions.

In addition, we have gazetted 21% of our territory as protected areas.

As a result, Gabon's forest cover has remained stable at 88%, and our deforestation rate is less than 0.1%.

Carbon dioxide emissions resulting from deforestation and forest degradation between 2001 and 2010 were 450 million tons less than in the 1990 -2000 reference period. It is a *minimal* indication of the value that our efforts represent for the global environment.

More recently, I created the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, and an inter-Ministerial Climate Council, that I chair personally, in order to strengthen coherence in our policies and to improve our governance structure.

We completed our Climate Plan in the run up to COP 17 in Durban, and we are currently working on a consolidated national land use plan to be anchored on a new law.

A new Code for Sustainable Development, which will translate our ambitions and policies into action, is currently under discussion in Parliament.

This new legislation addresses the issue of 'means of implementation'. It provides for the creation of a national registry of Sustainable Development Credits, a mechanism to offset any negative impacts of development projects.

In addition, it will integrate natural capital into our national accounting system, in line with the recent declaration of the Gaborone Summit on Sustainable Development.

Madam President

Our approach, which seeks to catalyse low carbon growth, responsible investment, whilst creating infrastructure and jobs, should help us develop a new model of development.

To be credible, these policies require adequate investment in scientific tools to evaluate, monitor and measure their impacts and outcomes.

Our efforts have benefitted from the support of partners. We are grateful to France and Brazil, for their support in establishing a satellite image base station, AGEOS, in Gabon. This station will provide imagery to almost all of Africa's rain forest nations, enabling monitoring of deforestation and other land use changes.

Madam President

Over the past 20 years, I believe that my country has made commendable efforts. But much remains to be done.

We will not advance towards the future we want if we do not adopt a more holistic approach to sustainable development with a balanced emphasis on social equity and poverty reduction as well as the environment.

As leaders we have a collective responsibility, a common but differentiated responsibility. Twenty years ago our predecessors laid the foundation and made a strong commitment. Today the task is ours.

We are here to renew our political commitment to act on sustainable development, with a new vision based on a balanced approach, stronger and more efficient global institutions and adequate resources for implementation. We all know that past commitments have not always been met. But we cannot continue along this path, when so many young people in our countries look upon us for solutions.

The people of Africa expect our actions to bring solutions to the problems of:

- food security and agricultural productivity;
- global financial crises and economic recession;
- water shortages;
- energy crises;
- environmental crises;
- and biodiversity loss.

A sustainable economy that integrates social capital, natural capital and economic capital is the only response.

As we strive for a common definition of the green economy, in Gabon, we are prepared to seize the opportunities that the green economy offers in the dual fight against poverty and for environmental sustainability.

Furthermore, we all need to commit to reform and reinforce the global institutions of sustainable development. In addition to strengthening the ECOSOC, we need to initiate the transformation of UNEP into a full-fledged organisation based in Nairobi.



Sustainable development requires that we establish effective means of measuring progress and outcomes. To do so we will have to account for natural and social capital, in addition to the classic economic indicators of development.

In this process, we must ensure the proper transition from MDGs to a new set of goals that take into account the new challenges of sustainable development.

We need to act in solidarity and find additional resources to tackle current and future challenges. Past commitments should be met; but we also have to consider how to increase resources through innovative financing mechanisms.

In closing, Madam President, I appeal to all of us to act with determination and vision.

We must act together as a global community, in a spirit of international solidarity and with a guiding principal of shared responsibility.

We cannot continue to discuss the future of the planet in the conditional. We have to act now!

Mesdames et Messieurs,

On ne peut plus se permettre de conjuguer le futur de la planète au conditionnel. Il nous faut agir maintenant !

Merci beaucoup. Thank you.