

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY ADDRESS:
MRS. LALAO RAVALOMANANA
MARCH 08, 2011**

Good morning, ladies.

We live in challenging times. As women in Africa, our men carry the weight of our future on their shoulders. Whether that's putting food on the table at the end of the day, providing a roof and a bed to tuck our children into every night, or, indeed, having a safe place to wake up to every morning with the prospect of work to make it all happen again the next day.

Yet women in Africa are increasingly playing a more critical role in our present and our future. And it is our duty on International Women's Day to recognise our own efforts, whether our own successes or the successes we inspire in our men.

Today, Madagascar faces its own very tough set of challenges. And yet challenges are the very foundation of opportunity. And it is the opportunity that our country faces now that we must embrace – to ensure a safe and secure future for Malagasy women.



Mrs. Lalao Ravalomanana

Today, Madagascar faces its own very tough set of challenges. And yet challenges are the very foundation of opportunity. And it is the opportunity that our country faces now that we must embrace – to ensure a safe and secure future for Malagasy women.

Today, Madagascar faces its own very tough set of challenges. And yet challenges are the very foundation of opportunity. And it is the opportunity that our country faces now that we must embrace – to ensure a safe and secure future for Malagasy women.

There are hundreds of thousands of women and children in our beloved Madagascar facing enormous challenges right now. Many can't feed themselves or their families. Many more can't educate themselves or their children.

And yet the Malagasy people do not lose hope. They are still peaceful. And we can be proud that our people show wisdom and uphold the values we cherish in our culture: Fihavanana, solidarity and unity.

My husband, President Marc Ravalomanana, is working tirelessly to return to Madagascar to secure a better future for our people. To return democracy and the rule of law to our country. To build together a better future for all, especially for women, mothers and children.

As women of Africa, we are duty bound to support the good work of our men. We are duty bound to recognise the amazing efforts of our women. We are duty bound to embrace the opportunity that lies in each and every one of us to better serve our country, especially in those tough challenging times.

There is a better future for all women in Africa. There is an incredible future for women in Madagascar. These are exciting times for international women.

We take this opportunity to salute each and every one of them – those who are making incredible marks on our history; those who are making incredible marks on their own lives and the lives of their families; those who are making incredible marks on society, or just the communities in which they live; those who are putting food on their table this evening and teaching their children.

We women salute those women who are facing the challenges and treating them as opportunities: Opportunities worthy of our and Madagascar's future and so exciting to embrace. Because we are the future women of the world – worthy of each and every one of us being recognised on International Women's Day.

God bless you!

Thank you.