



In July 2002 Marc Ravalomanana, a prosperous businessman, was elected President of Madagascar by ousting the incumbent Ratsiraka. Ravalomanana pushed on an agenda that sought to reduce poverty and focused on economic growth and market liberalization. According to opinion polls up to 70% of the population approved his policies and he was re-elected in December 2006. However, in 2008 tensions rose between him and Andry Rajoelina, a very successful media entrepreneur and mayor of the capital city Antananarivo, a city of almost 2 million people.

In 2008, the Ravalomanana government allegedly delayed the disbursement of funds for various local government infrastructure projects in the capital and diverted investment away from the city. When Ravalomanana also closed down a radio station owned by Rajoelina, after airing a speech by former President Ratsiraka, tensions mounted to its highest point. This led to the removal of Rajoelina, as mayor of the capital which triggered the outbreak of a revolution. The military force, who had always been neutral, took sides with Rajoelina. The political crisis of Madagascar can thus be brought back to a clash between two powerful personalities, but has had devastating consequences for a whole nation.

Following the overthrow that led to the formation of the High Transitional Authority on 17 March 2009 and the failure of various international mediation efforts since then, Madagascar is being subjected to political and economic sanctions. These penalties have of course had serious implications for the people of Madagascar. Madagascar could not rely on international aid of which it depends for 70% of its revenue.

“The result is that Madagascar today has one of the highest levels of child malnutrition in the world, with levels comparable to those of Afghanistan or Yemen,” stated UN’s special rapporteur on the Right to Food Olivier De Schutter.

### **Roadmap for Madagascar**

The South African Development Community (SADC), with the participation of the leaders of South Africa, Botswana and Zambia, has been engaged in the mediation process ever since the coup in 2009. It adopted a Roadmap for Ending the Crisis in Madagascar at a summit of heads of state and governments. The roadmap introduces incentives to improve its democratic and humanitarian performance and is recognized by the international community. It is in fact especially designed to facilitate a political truce and reintroduce Madagascar into the international community.

The main priority of the Roadmap lies within the organization of free elections in a period of 12 months. Prior to those elections an interim government will be formed with Rajoelina as president. This was strongly contested by many opposition parties. The roadmap also gives the head of state the power to appoint a prime minister and it declares that every exiled person who opposed the government is free to return to its home state. This would entail that former president Ravalomanana would to be relieved from his banishment and could even return into national politics as a member of the opposition.

On September 17 of 2011 a big step has been made towards lifting Madagascar from the crisis with the signing of the roadmap by most of the opposition parties. Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon, has declared his satisfaction with the progress made in Madagascar. "I urge all the Malagasy parties to agree on the composition of the government in transition, as it is consistent with the dispositions made in the roadmap" he stated. Mr. Ban also pledged the continuing commitment of the UN to help Madagascar try to consolidate peace.

So now, after 2 years of profound crisis, there's new hope for the Malagasy people.