

Newsletter

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Society activities

The first meeting in 2014 will be on Wednesday 26th March with a talk by Joro Rakotoarinivo of the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew on 'The Palms of Madagascar - their diversity and conservation'. The meetings later in the year will be on Wednesday 25th June, to celebrate Madagascar's Independence Day, and a daytime event on Saturday 18th October. Full details are on our website at www.anglo-malagasy-society.co.uk, which also has a summary of previous talks for those unable to attend, together with much other useful information. This includes directions to the venue for our meetings, which is the Upper Vestry Hall of St George's Church, Bloomsbury, London WC1A 2HR, two minutes' walk from the British Museum.

The next newsletter will be published in June 2014. Please send any material for inclusion as well as any changes in your contact details to the editor Julian Cooke, whose e-mail address is juliancooke@yahoo.co.uk.

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Politics in Madagascar



The second round of the presidential election was held on 20th December 2013 between Jean-Louis Robinson and Hery Rajaonarimampianina. Each candidate claimed victory. The provisional results were initially delayed and were announced on 3rd January by the national electoral commission CENIT, in a ceremony well attended by the international community but boycotted by Robinson, who claimed that he had won 53% of the vote. These initial results instead gave Rajaonarimampianina (now referred to as Hery) 53.5% of votes polled, although in some districts the results were rejected.



The polls passed peaceably although with a 10% lower turn-out than in the first round; the participation rate of 50.7% was the lowest in a presidential election since 1965. Robinson's supporters, including Saraha Rabeharisoa of the Green party and Professor Raymond Ranjeva, provided a long list of shortcomings, suggesting fraud in a number of anomalies such as pre-marked ballot papers, phantom voters and ballot boxes missing in certain areas that might have been diverted elsewhere. The opposition also objected to the use of the state administration by certain candidates and of intimidation. The victor's budget was estimated to have been \$43m with some financing from the Indo-Pakistani community, the *karana*. Professor Ranjeva said that to say the elections had passed smoothly just because there had been no incidents at the time of voting was erroneous.

Marc Ravalomanana, who had backed Robinson, said on 6th January that his movement's struggle would continue until he returned to Madagascar; he called for an audit of the election results and lobbied the international community to reject the outcome. He also nominated Roland Ravatomanga, the Minister of Agriculture, as his representative in place of Mamy Rakotoarivelo, the president of the Transitional Congress.

On 8th January CENIT said that neither candidate would be disqualified as Robinson was a private citizen and Hery had resigned from his position, such that neither could be guilty of abusing their public position which was the main basis for the claim. Robinson said he would accept the judgment of the Special Electoral Court (CES) provided his opponent also agreed to accept defeat if the CES annulled votes for him, but on 13th January he was still calling for a re-count as well as hinting at the consequences if unheeded, contrary to his earlier call for calm.

There were some concerns that the military would look to take control if the country were divided politically. In its last council meeting Rajoelina's Transition council promoted yet more officers (38) to the rank of general.

As it became more likely that Hery would win, the debate intensified on who would be prime minister. Roland Ratsiraka believed that he was in good stead given his decent results in the first round and the fact that he is not Merina, in line with the political tradition, although his MTS party won few seats. The constitution stipulates that the president should choose the prime minister from the party with a majority in the Assembly (not specified, so there was a debate over whether this should be a simple one or two-thirds). This would be Rajoelina's MAPAR; he was expected to ask for the role and was reported to have offered to re-imburse the campaign expenses of independent deputies who backed his party. Norbert Lala Ratsirahonana of the party AVI was another potential candidate.

The definitive results announced on 17th January confirmed a total for Hery of 53.49% against 46.51% for Robinson. In the end the CES made few adjustments and rejected all the submissions from Robinson as well as counter-claims from the winner. It only annulled the result in 43 polling bureaux out of 20,001 in total due to poor or absent documentation. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) said it would accept the results and the African Union said it would re-admit Madagascar once the new president were installed.

Leonidas Tezapsidis, the European Union ambassador, applauded what he called an important stage in the transition, which was still not finished, while the US embassy also supported the outcome.

While Robinson told a gathering of his supporters that the elections had been corrupted and that he would never accept massive fraud, he said that they should not take to the streets, to avoid bloodshed. Various parties that had previously supported Robinson moved to back the new president, including Rabearisoa and the former prime minister Camille Vital.

Hery said that he would prioritise health and education while on more contentious issues said that he was open to the return from exile of Ravalomanana and preferred not to dwell on the past, so might not prosecute any illegal activities in the Transition regime. He has instead proved to be less tolerant.

In a lavish handing-over ceremony which appeared orchestrated in his favour, Rajoelina alone gave a speech in which he said he would henceforth be no more than a citizen, although one close to the main political players whom he encouraged to work for the future of Madagascar.

Hery in his own speech when invested as president said that security, justice and the fight against corruption would underpin his actions, which would entail a new broom compared to the actions of the past. He indicated that he would not be dependent on his previous mentor, saying his friends should let him be free to approach others. The air of conciliation was marked by the presence of Robinson and his wife. The investiture ceremony was marred by an incident in which a grenade attack killed a six-year old child and injured more than fifty people, two of whom died subsequently.

Prime Minister Omer Beriziky's government duly resigned but he was asked to continue to function until a new team was in place, expected to be in mid-February. Yamina Benguigui, the French minister responsible for relations with Francophone countries, appeared to reveal France's support for Rajoelina when she said that he would be part of the government and was not someone who could be cast aside, given his party's position in the Assembly. Benguigui also said that France would help Madagascar in its re-integration into the international community, starting with the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie. The African Union lifted its sanctions and Hery was given a warm welcome at its summit in Addis Ababa at the end of January, where he called for a donor conference to be held within three months to help to finance the country's reconstruction. The US ambassador said that his country would not lift sanctions yet.

Hery set out his stall for a non-negotiable national reconciliation and respect for human rights. In his first cabinet meeting the new President announced a return to the state of law, abolishing the Forces d'Intervention Spéciales (FIS), led by Colonel René Lylison, and the Direction de Sécurité de la Territoire (DST), which had been active under Rajoelina. Hery also abolished the positions of Secretary General to the Presidency, held by Haja Resampa, and of the cabinet director for the Presidency.

Rajoelina said on 22nd January that he was available to serve as prime minister, while Hery said he preferred to await the final results for the Assembly before any decision. On 27th January Robinson confirmed his acceptance of Hery's victory and said he would establish a national committee to co-ordinate opposition, although he faced the handicap of his party Hery Vaovaon'i Madagasikara (HVM) having had no candidates for seats in the Assembly.

Hery met Linda Thomas-Greenfield, from the US State Department, who encouraged him to put together an inclusive government and who said that the US was re-assessing Madagascar's inclusion in the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), the loss of which had hit the textile industry particularly hard.

Hery on his return from Addis Ababa, where he denied meeting Ravalomanana, said that his government must reflect a national reconciliation that should be political, social and economic. Ravalomanana's wife Lalao said on 7th February that her husband had accepted the result of the election; she returned to Madagascar with her daughter-in-law without any incident. Later in the month Hajo Andrianainarivelo and the Green part offered their support to the new President.

Ahead of the results for the Assembly there was some tension and talk of a potential role for the military. Richard Ravalomanana, the head of the Gendarmerie Nationale, resigned on 4th February saying that there would be an uncertain period full of risks after the announcement of results, although General Lucien Rakotoarimasy, the head of the armed forces, denied there would be a military coup saying it was not in the country's culture. The commemoration of events on 7th February 2009 passed without incident, although Hery's absence was seen as a further way of distancing himself from Rajoelina. Later in February Hery at a meeting with the newly-appointed generals said that the armed forces were the basis for a return to a state of law and the guarantee of national unity.

The CES, having examined complaints over 66 seats and annulled the results in four of them, announced on 7th February the final results for the 151 seats in the Assembly: 49 went to Rajoelina's MAPAR and 20 to Ravalomanana, with 44 to a range of independent candidates and 34 to a number of other political parties, such as the Malagasy Miara Miainga (MMM) of Hajo Andrianainarivelo and the Greens.

Catherine Ashton, the EU head of foreign affairs, congratulated the successful deputies and expressed her confidence in the new President, welcoming his conciliatory approach and willingness to break with the past which would facilitate a full normalisation of relations with Europe.

Jean De Dieu Maharante, the leader of MAPAR, claimed that as the largest party it was able to nominate the prime minister and Rajoelina was still its chief candidate, although the new prime minister, as well as ideally competent, should also be from a different region to the President (who is Merina) and acceptable to international community. On 12th February Hery reaffirmed that he would choose the prime minister while considering the interests of the nation. He had earlier on 8th February appointed Henry Rabary-Njaka, Rivo Rakotovao, Jaobarison

Randrianavony, Rachid Mohamed, Nicole Andrianarivoson, Herisoa Razanadrakoto, Paul Rabary and James Andrianalisoa as special advisers.

On 19th February Christine Razanamahasoa, the former Minister of Justice and a key member of the Transition, was elected as president of the National Assembly by 77 votes to 69 with Rajoelina's MAPAR outnumbering the new Plateforme pour la Majorité Présidentielle (PMP) which supported Hery, including Ravalomanana's party. MAPAR also moved to take charge of 17 of the 27 parliamentary commissions while its ally made up largely of independents, the Groupement Parlementaire Spécial (GPS), took a further nine leaving just one headed by the current opposition. MAPAR had already taken most of the seats on the permanent bureau in the Assembly, which was to prove increasingly contentious.

The Haute Cour Constitutionnelle (HCC) gave its opinion that the right to choose the prime minister fell to MAPAR as the legally-constituted party or group of parties that had the largest number of deputies. However, the HCC said that due to the importance of the dual executive structure and in light of the current circumstances, then the choice should be agreed between the largest party and the president.

On 22nd February Rajoelina renounced with some bitterness what he said was his entitlement to the role of prime minister, as had been earlier decided by MAPAR's national bureau. He said that as usual he was motivated by a love of his country while warning that there was such a thing as divine justice. He said that he had had an inconclusive meeting with Hery, deplored the President's association with the Ravalomanana movement and said that he would let MAPAR choose whom it would like.

The mood was tense, with talk of the Assembly led by MAPAR impeaching the President or his dissolving the Assembly. The incumbent prime minister, Omer Beriziky, asked the HCC to give a further opinion on the position: it confirmed that the President was pre-eminent due to his election by universal suffrage. His position was strengthened by the move by a number of independent deputies to the PMP, the platform supporting him.

MAPAR then proposed that Haja Resampa take the role, arguing he was competent and had worked with Hery previously, but there was no obligation for the President to accept and he was unlikely to re-appoint someone he had recently dismissed to a more important role. The PMP proposed Jules Etienne Rolland Raharivony and claimed that it had the backing of 95 members of the Assembly. On 27th February the President rejected the nomination of Resampa. Beriziky's role continued, by default. The international community was in an awkward position: the EU ambassador said that it was for the President to decide as it would not interfere in the internal affairs of Madagascar while the US ambassador, Eric Wong, was more forthright in saying that it would be better for the new prime minister to be neutral and not associated with the previous regime. Hery's rejection of Resampa's nomination showed that he was increasingly independent of Rajoelina, whose supporters found objectionable that he had spurned his former sponsor.

In early March the President moved to replace three members of the HCC including its head, in line with the quota afforded him; MAPAR ceded some ground, recognising that the move

precluded its move to petition the HCC. Christine Razanamahasoa said it was necessary to find an accord on the new prime minister between MAPAR, the PMP behind Hery and the GPS, which encompassed the independents who had not moved to the PMP. However, the sacking on 7th March of Augustin Andriamananoro from his position as President of the Office Malagasy d'Etudes et de Régulation des Télécommunications (OMERT) hurt relations between the parties: he was also vice-president of Rajoelina's group and had been a key member of the regime, criticised for his role in the closure of opposition radio stations. MAPAR rejected the four names put forward by the President (Omer Beriziky, Kolo Roger, Horace Gatién and Herilanto Raveloarison) and insisted on Resampa becoming prime minister.

While Ravalomanana saw the scope to return from exile, he accepted would be after the new government was in place. James Andrianalisoa, the new head of Malagasy civil aviation, said that the NOTAMs issued under the previous regime to bar his return from exile had not complied with international standards.

Hery visited the US from 18th March, holding meetings in New York at the United Nations and then in Washington with Christine Lagarde of the IMF as well as the World Bank. He returned via Paris, following which he expressed increasing confidence that the international community would resume its support for Madagascar, in spite of the uncertainty over a new prime minister. Hery has been invited to attend an EU-Africa summit in Brussels on 2nd-4th April.

Economic and social matters

Finance and aid

There were indications of a renewal of finance and aid in February from the World Bank, the EU and the IMF, which formally re-established relations. The World Bank announced at the beginning of March that it would provide \$65m to help to improve the health and food security of 13m Malagasy. The Chinese government offered \$16m. The World Bank indicated that its loans might only amount to \$140-200m a year initially, less than in earlier years even though its country representative Haleh Bridi said Madagascar was 'either already broke or close to it'.

The OECD said that in spite of sanctions Madagascar had still received \$188m of aid in 2012, of which about a third had come from the EU and the World Bank while France and the US had been the most generous bilateral donors, with \$73m and \$52m respectively. The total compared to \$564m in 2008. The Minister of Economy and Industry, Pierrot Botozaza, cited a different figure of \$388m for 2012, which was still materially below that of other African countries per capita. He said there needed to be greater transparency in the details of aid as well as a greater need for it to go on education and industry.

A report by Instat in February indicated that Madagascar would only meet one of its 2015 millennium objectives, that of keeping the incidence of HIV/AIDS below 1%. It would miss the other seven targets largely due to the high incidence of poverty, with some 72% of the population living below the poverty line (the World Bank estimate is nearer 90%).

A separate report from Instat in March said that the proportion of those employed in the informal sector had risen from 60% in 2008 to 80% in 2013, and that this sector now represented 24% of the country's GDP.

The World Food Programme has announced that it will receive €4.5m from the EU to fund the provision of a daily school meal to 219,000 people in 1,250 primary schools in the regions of Anosy, Androy and Atsimo-Andrefana.

The International Labour Organisation in a report in January said that the number of Malagasy migrants might escalate rapidly if economic conditions did not improve. The number living abroad is calculated at 250,000 with their remittances equivalent to 5% of GDP. The President called in late January for the diaspora to be involved in funding projects and finding markets for agricultural products in particular.

Overseas finance is in place to finance a census in 2015, which will cost \$15m and be the first since 1993. Subsequent surveys have been postponed and the survey will help to establish the scale of growth in the country's population, estimated now to be over 23m.

The Ariary has weakened notably under the new President, who while Minister of Finance in the Transition had managed to keep it remarkably stable in spite of an elevated inflation rate of approximately 8% p.a. The exchange rate has moved to more than 3,200 Ariary to the euro due to two main factors: the ending of heavy inward investment into major mining projects and a purchase of goods overseas in anticipation of an economic recovery. The World Bank has forecast an increase in GDP of 3.7% in 2014 and 4% in 2015, which is an improvement but insufficient to reduce poverty materially.

Threats

According to a World Bank report in March, Madagascar is one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change with a quarter of its population exposed to natural disasters such as cyclones and drought. The World Bank also estimated that environmental mismanagement, notably the practice of *tavy*, cost the country some \$450m a year.



. The campaign to destroy swarms of locusts has made slow progress with only a sixth of the 1.5m hectares affected being treated as of early March.

Poor rains and the locust invasion led to reduction of 12% in rice production in 2013, when Madagascar imported 410,370 tonnes or double the amount in 2012

Madagascar improved eight places to a position of 81st out of 180 countries in Reporters Sans Frontières latest assessment.

Health

The recent plague epidemic in Madagascar was reported in January to have claimed the lives of 73 people out of 319 cases of those infected with the disease since September.

A report in February estimated that 63% of the deaths in childbirth of girls and women aged 15 to 25 was due to illegal abortions; the rate of pregnancy in girls aged 15-19 was 28%, well above the average for the Indian Ocean of 2-3%.

Human rights

The US Department of State was again heavily critical of Madagascar in its 2013 report on human rights. It accused the transitional regime of lacking the capacity to maintain a state of law leading to arbitrary killings by the forces of law and order as well as to mob rule. The report also criticised the degree of impunity in the country as well as the state of its prisons for those who were prosecuted.

A depressing report in March estimated that 91% of the prostitutes in the capital were under 18 while 7% of 13-year old girls and 28% of 15-year olds were in the trade. Moreover, 6% of 14-year old girls had been raped and 41% of those aged 17 had been sexually abused.

Business

Courts, the furniture retailer now owned by the Mauritian group BAI, said in January that it would seek international arbitration on its dispute with the ARO insurance company, part owned by Andry Rajoelina, over its refusal to cover \$7m of damages in looting in March 2009.

The textile industry has high hopes of being admitted again to the US trade convention AGOA, the current incarnation of which runs to September 2015. The ending in 2009 led to the estimated closure of 22 businesses and the loss of 200,000 jobs.

Tourism

The number of visitors to Madagascar in 2013 fell by 22% from the 275,000 in 2012, leaving the figure well below the record of 375,000 in 2008. Tourism has not been helped by a series of attacks on tourists in national parks and on Nosy Be.

Madagascar was, however, second in the Rough Guides list of countries to visit in 2014.

Minerals

The French company Rhodia has taken on an agreement with the German firm Tantalus to mine and refine various rare earths in the Ampasindava peninsula in north-west Madagascar. The project is expected to start this year and forecast to produce 15,000 tonnes annually, which might generate some \$500m for the state.

Sherritt International said in January that its Ambatovy nickel operations in Madagascar had achieved commercial production, defined as 70% of ore throughput of its nameplate capacity (which is 60,000 tonnes p.a. of finished nickel and 5,500 tonnes of cobalt).

In the Fraser Institute's annual *Survey of Mining Companies* Madagascar slipped further to a rank of 90th out of 96 in 2012 compared to 46th out of 79 in 2010-11, when it first appeared in the list.

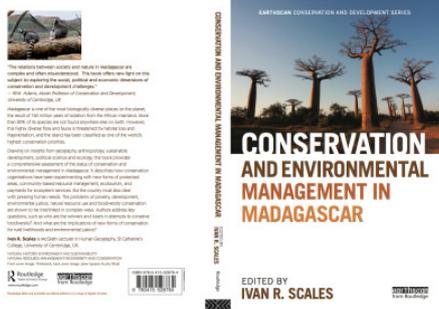
Wildlife and conservation

Forests

In February the new President said he would personally lead efforts to end the pillaging of the country's natural riches and criticised failings in state bodies. Unfortunately his position seemed to stimulate an acceleration in the exporting of rosewood, with an estimated 6,000 tonnes shipped in mid-February. Mamy Ravatomanga, a businessman close to Rajoelina, was barred from leaving the country due to an investigation into money laundering and illegal wood exports. On a visit to Madagascar at the beginning of March a Chinese deputy minister of foreign affairs said that China would call on its citizens to respect local laws.

A research report by scientists from Blue Ventures and the University of Antananarivo's Department of Forestry has quantified long-term changes in mangrove forest cover. The study highlighted the Ambanja and Ambaro bays in Madagascar's north-west as hotspots of deforestation, with more than 20% of the region's mangroves being lost between 1990 and 2010 primarily due to forest cutting for charcoal production.

Publications and events



A new book edited by Ivan Scales on Conservation and Environmental Management in Madagascar has been published by Routledge. It includes a chapter on 'Early Human Settlers and their Impact on Madagascar's Landscapes' by the late Robert E. Dewar as well as sections on the country's biodiversity, deforestation and tourism.

The next Friends of Madagascar meeting will take place in the village of Leek Wootton in Warwickshire on 17th May 2014, with talks by Chris White on his scouting expedition in 2013 and by the wildlife photographer Mike Harrison. This year will be a 40th anniversary event.