

# Newsletter

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## Society activities

The Society's third meeting for 2016 was a daytime gathering on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> October when there were talks about Madagascar by Herizo Andrianandrasana on conservation projects, Andrew Cooke on small-scale mining and Michael Rakotoarivony on the development of classical music in the country. There was also music from Olga del Madagascar.

The details of events for 2017 will be publicised on Facebook and on our website at [www.anglo-malagasy.com](http://www.anglo-malagasy.com), which also has a summary of some of the 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 March 2017. 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](mailto:juliancooke@yahoo.co.uk).

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## Politics in Madagascar

The last three months in Madagascar have seen some continued tension in particular over what has been seen as an increasingly authoritarian government, while the country has also hosted important summits.

On 1<sup>st</sup> October President Hery Rajaonarimampianina convened a meeting of the senior officers in the army and Gendarmerie to review security in the country and also perhaps to deal with potential *coups d'état*, one of which was reported to have been attempted the next day. Amid some continued criticism of the President another new movement, this one named Dialogue for the Nation's Health, called for immediate change.

Marc Ravalomanana, the former president, was appointed in October as a special adviser to the mayor of Antananarivo, who is his wife Lalao; he had been mayor himself previously. He talked of plans to rebuild the capital and to continue to improve its sanitation, although that has led to conflict with street vendors and would also depend on new sources of finance. The Ravalomananas appointed as their own adviser a Briton James Robinson, who is a professor at Harvard and author of *Why Nations Fail*.

The French ambassador Veronique Vouland-Aneni called for dialogue ahead of the next round of elections as well as the more imminent summit of Francophone countries in November, while the German ambassador Harald Gehrig said that democracy in the country would be an empty shell without the rule of law. Mme Vouland-Aneni met Andry Rajoelina in November.

The next session of the National Assembly, which started on 20<sup>th</sup> October, was mired by internal disputes and marred by the continued call by deputies for benefits, while its principal purpose was to pass the new budget or Loi des Finances. The Senate was preoccupied with the case of René Lylison, the MAPAR senator for whose arrest a mandate had supposedly been issued in June but was revealed to have been done only in September instead. He had disappeared earlier in the year but was active on Facebook. SEFAFI, in its capacity as the observer on public life, noted that even when laws were passed they were rarely applied.

The dispute over the Chinese company Jiuxing Mines at Soamahamanina continued. While the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Béatrice Attalah, praised the Chinese for their donations (including a new building for her ministry) and called for Chinese investors to come to the country there was widespread opposition and continued protests in the village. Jiuxing announced a strategic retreat on 7<sup>th</sup> October which the Minister of Mines said was due to the politicisation of the affair. The dispute continued, a number of villagers remained under arrest and the new human rights watchdog, the Commission Nationale Indépendante des Droits de l'Homme (CNIDH), called for the police to avoid any brutality and to respect the presumption of innocence until proven guilty. Later, in November, the five protestors were given a suspended sentence of one year in prison while one topic for the new commission will be the abolition of the death penalty which remains to be enacted since first drafted as a law in 2015.

There were further rumours at the end of October of a possible coup d'état arising from a communiqué allegedly written by junior officers.

While there was little progress in preparing for regional and provincial elections which the prime minister, Olivier Mahafaly, had indicated would take place in 2017 there was more focus on the next presidential elections in 2018. An EU mission in October engaged with the electoral commission CENI on plans for the polls and on their proper conduct. As before this would entail ensuring that the list of voters was more representative than the approximately 8.3m registered in a population estimated at near 24m. Didier Ratsiraka, another former president who is now eighty years old, toured the country in October for a series of meetings that celebrated the fortieth anniversary of his party AREMA and was seen as his own preparation as a potential candidate. During the tour he made the remarkable claim that the hospital boat Mercy Ships, which had been in Toamasina from October 2014 to June 2016 to carry out a series of operations, had been found with 21 tonnes of gold. Another former president Albert Zafy

claimed in the month that the true power in the country lay with a coterie of women close to the president, including his wife, and also criticised newly-arrived Chinese who he said were greedy for the country's mineral wealth.

There was some disappointment that only two heads of state attended the COMESA summit in October in spite of the President's efforts, although one of them, Robert Mugabe, was typically blunt in his comments on arrival in the country. The final preparations for the summit in the capital Antananarivo of Francophone countries on 22<sup>nd</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> November were marked by dissatisfaction over the costs and restrictions placed on the local population. There was a small explosion in early November at one of the host hotels at Ivato which belonged to Claudine Razaimamonjy, an adviser to the President. The new *Route de la Francophonie* that was opened especially to take delegates from the airport was then closed a week later after the summit to be finished properly, which was expected to take another year; at its inauguration President Rajaonarimampianina had praised the quality of the road, built by China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC) in a span of only six months. The government was criticised for giving a week's school holiday and for providing instructions on hygiene and how to dress appropriately, which it denied. France provided 200 chauffeur-driven cars for the event.

There were a number of peaceful demonstrations at the inauguration of the event that were arranged by various movements, including *Wake Up Madagascar* which also organised a potentially noisy protest with saucepans at the Maki stadium. Overall the Summit was deemed to have been a success.

The president held a number of meetings with visiting heads of state, of whom Justin Trudeau of Canada was one of the most prominent. Francois Hollande spoke of the insecurity in the country and its impact on French citizens; he did not comment publicly on the disputed Iles Eparses and paid tribute to the victims of the 1947 uprising. He was also said to have been the target of a man of Franco-Tunisian origin who was arrested on the eve of the event.

The debates in November over the budget were marked by deputies threatening a boycott if they did not receive their long-demanded 4x4 vehicles as well as 200m ariary (£50,000) for each district. This could be seen positively as a policy of continued decentralisation or perhaps as a means to control patronage; a number of deputies called for the Minister of Finance, Gervais Rakotoarimanana, to resign given his opposition to this claim. In the end the Loi des Finances was passed on 25<sup>th</sup> November by 47 of the 151 deputies, with Ravalomanana's party TIM and MAPAR, the party backing Andry Rajoelina, both missing the final vote.

These two parties called in December for the National Assembly to be dissolved on the basis that its deputies served little purpose; HVM, the party supporting the President, said there was no intention to do so and on 19<sup>th</sup> December his supporters in Fianarantsoa called for Hery Rajaonarimampianina to stand for president again in 2018.

Madagascar ranked 33<sup>rd</sup> out of 54 African countries in the latest report on governance by the Mo Ibrahim Foundation; it had shown the second worst deterioration since the report's inception in 2008, behind Libya.

# Economic and social matters

## Finance and aid

The Malagasy economy is expected to have grown by nearly 3.5% in 2016, a little above the 3% rate in 2015 when strikes at Air Madagascar had an impact on tourism. The economy has been helped by an expansion of the textile sector following the country's re-integration into the American Growth and Opportunity Act (while an astute member of the Society has noted that Marks & Spencer also has a new range of jumpers sourced from Madagascar). The Economic Development Board of Madagascar announced plans in November for a proposed new economic zone dubbed Textile City that would cost over \$250m if and when funded.

President Rajaonarimampianina told a conference with donors and potential investors in Paris on 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> December that the country needed growth of 6.5% a year to enable a structural shift in poverty while General Herilanto Raveloharison, the minister of economy and planning, said the government aimed to reach this target by 2019.

The Malagasy government had hoped to secure up to \$5bn of commitments at the conference. After it was over the governor of the country's central bank, Alain Rasolofondraibe, said the total amount of commitments to finance the National Development Plan stood at \$6.4 billion; the existing Plan runs from 2015 to 2019, and some of the pledges made by donors covered the period 2017 to 2020 while others ran from 2017 to 2021. France said it would provide separately €62m for improved urbanisation in the capital and six other cities; the World Bank gave \$65m to help to stabilise public finances and to improve the country's investment environment; and the EU provided a further €30m of budgetary aid for 2017-18.

During the Francophone summit the King of Morocco called for an economic partnership to help both countries, although his move was also suspected of having a political dimension as his country seeks support to rejoin the African Union. Morocco signed twenty-eight agreements on matters including safeguarding the Pangalanes Canal while King Mohammed was at the opening of a new maternity hospital and a training school in Antsirabe (where the king's grandfather had been in residence until expelled in 1954) which Morocco had funded with €26m.

The prime minister said that the country needed to improve its capacity to make use of the aid that was promised to it. The US said that it provided \$80m of aid annually and its ambassador said that the election of Donald Trump was unlikely to affect previous commitments. The US had also committed \$0.75m in October to help the Malagasy state to counter human trafficking. There has also been a sizeable increase in inward investment in the first nine months of 2016.

The state utility JIRAMA remains at the centre of affairs. A report in October suggested that only 39% of the electricity was commercialised with the rest lost, stolen or used unpaid. The government indicated that if the number of people paying their bills increased from 60% to 90% then the utility would see its revenue increase by 300bn ariary a year, the same amount as it had had in emergency funding in the last year. In November the African Development Bank

approved funding of \$18m for the energy sector and in particular to improve the efficiency with which JIRAMA was run, produced electricity and collected income. A US company called Dominovas Energy held further meetings in Madagascar in late November and said it expected to complete all the formalities for its planned 650MW power plant in 2017.

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## Health

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With the continued drought in the south of Madagascar UN agencies in October again raised concerns on the risk of a catastrophe which would have an impact on an estimated 850,000 people. The EU announced funding of €4.8m in October for various agencies to help some 250,000 children affected by malnutrition while in November the World Bank committed a further \$35m and the Swiss \$0.5m in December. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment, John Knox, called at the end of his visit in October for countries producing greenhouse gases to act without delay to help vulnerable countries such as Madagascar to avoid the worst effects of climate change on the region. An update from the UN in December confirmed the continued difficulties in the region.

An index published by the International Food Policy Research Institute estimated that 35.4% of Malagasy were malnourished and that the country had lagged others even though the rate had declined from 44.2% in the year 2000.

Another outbreak of bubonic plague, this time in the Befotaka district in August, had by November affected fifty people and claimed a number of lives.

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## Business and agriculture

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In the latest edition of Doing Business Madagascar improved two places to a still lowly 167<sup>th</sup> place of 190 countries covered. The country was ranked 130<sup>th</sup> out of 144 countries in the World Economic Forum's 2016 review of competitiveness.

Groupe Axian, the majority shareholder in Telma Madagascar, has committed to invest \$250m over a three-year period to improve its network. Alongside the summit for COMESA that Madagascar hosted in October the government signed an agreement with Mauritius to accelerate the creation of a special economic zone at Tolagnaro.

In October Unima, a leading shrimp producer in Madagascar which has worked in cooperation with WWF, became the first shrimp farm in Africa to be awarded an Aquaculture Stewardship Certification (ASC) for its farm in Mahajamba on the northwest coast of Madagascar. The award recognises the work done in boosting community development, reforestation and sound management of mangrove areas.

While the cotton industry in Madagascar has struggled with the conditions in the south of the country as well as other factors, a new industry body has a target of 25,000 tonnes production in 2017 against just 5,000 tonnes in 2016.

A lack of rain might also affect plans to increase exports of lychees to 20,000 tons for the 2016-2017 season compared to 17,846 tons in 2015-2016 and 16,493 tons in 2014-2015. There were

more dry periods than last year in the Antsinanana and Analanjirofo regions which account for 55% of Madagascar's annual production of some 100,000 tonnes.

A report from the Danish research company Danwatch in December highlighted the pressures on vanilla farmers in Madagascar and the challenges of child labour in the industry and the country as a whole; a *Guardian* article can be seen at <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2016/dec/08/madagascar-152m-vanilla-industry-soured-child-labour-poverty>.

Heritiaina Randriamananatahina, an agriculture entrepreneur from Madagascar in his early twenties, was this year's winner of the \$25,000 Grand Prize in the sixth annual edition of the award for youth entrepreneurship African Leadership Academy and the MasterCard Foundation. Randriamananatahina is the founder of Fiombonana, an agro-processing enterprise that manufactures dairy products and confectionery using only Malagasy raw materials.

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## Insecurity

The high level of insecurity in Madagascar continued with a spate of bandit attacks especially on the Routes Nationales as well as the kidnapping of the son of a businessman whose protection by two members of the Gendarmerie's special forces was neither effective nor popular. The attacks by *dahalo* increased in intensity in November and the government announced another security operation called *Mazava 2016* which would deploy over 2,000 men. There were a number of incidences of summary justice, including the killing of eleven presumed *dahalo* by a crowd in a commune 70km south of Betafo. In mid-November it was reported that in six weeks 42 people had been killed in nine such separate incidents, for which no-one had been arrested and following which Marc Ravalomanana said the state needed to re-assert its authority. The prime minister looked to defend the government and there were a number of arrests the following week.

## Tourism



While the decision by the Moroccan government to support the Pangalanes Canal preservation project might have social, economic and environmental impacts it should also bring some benefit to the tourist industry.

The Pangalanes Canal was built between 1896 and 1904 using a succession of rivers and lakes running 700km along the east coast of Madagascar from Tamatave to Faranfangana.

In October the Malagasy government, which received funding from the World Bank, selected IOS Partners to advise on finding a strategic partner for Air Madagascar which it hoped to do by the end of 2016.

Air Seychelles now has a code-share agreement with Alitalia for its services to Madagascar which run four days a week which might lead to increased numbers of Italian visitors.

## Minerals

The Chinese company Jiuxing Mines, which had suspended activity at Soamahamanina in mid-July, later withdrew from operations while there were similar concerns over the impact of a Chinese malachite operation at Maintirano and a gold operation at the commune of Volihavo near Manajary. Some 25kg of gold was seized at Ivato airport in the latest attempt at smuggling the precious metal, from which the Malagasy government receives no revenue. It said in October that it would issue no new permits until it has in place a new mining code, which has been expected for some time. It also postponed tenders for forty offshore blocks until 2017.

In November the authorities moved to halt the mining for sapphires which had started in September around Didy in the Alotra-Mangoro district, in the Ankeniheny Zahamena wildlife corridor. The government is looking to formalise some of the extensive artisanal mining that is estimated to produce substantial quantities of gemstones as well as approximately fifteen tonnes of gold. There will be official exports of gold in 2016 for the first time and Anor, the national gold agency set up in 2015, expects to export some 500kg of the metal, worth \$15m.

Energizer Resources in Canada has announced plans to accelerate developments of its Molo graphite deposit which will entail the construction of a 15,000 tonne demonstration plant from January 2017 at a cost of \$7m.

ISR Capital, which is also listed in Canada, has said it is awaiting regulatory and shareholder approvals to acquire a 60 per cent stake in Tantalum Holding (Mauritius), which owns 100 per cent of Tantalum Rare Earth Malagasy. This latter holds a concession for a rare earth oxide resource in Madagascar which has been estimated independently to be worth over US\$1bn.

In December DNI Metals Inc, a further Canadian company, completed a letter of intent with Cougar Metals to develop its Vohitsara graphite project in Madagascar which is 55km from Toamasina and on the Toamasina-Brickaville belt that has been subject to artisanal mining in the past.

## Wildlife and conservation

### Forests

The campaign to secure the release of the activist Clovis Razafimala continued. He was arrested in September and accused of starting fires at several public buildings and inciting disturbances while his supporters said it was his legitimate opposition to the trafficking of rosewood that was behind his imprisonment.

Madagascar became the 73<sup>rd</sup> member of the International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO) at its fifty-second council session in Yokohama in Japan in November.

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## Species

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The WWF estimated in October that Madagascar would lose a third of its species over the course of this century if current trends were to continue. In one court case in November two of the three people accused of smuggling baby tortoises were convicted and were given prison sentences of 12-18 months while in a second case five smugglers were sentenced to 30 months in prison and fined 200m ariary.

## Charities and NGOs

The Tossing a Starfish Charity has produced its latest newsletter on its work in Madagascar which can be seen at <http://www.tascmadagascar.org>.

Money for Madagascar is looking to appoint a new Honorary Treasurer in 2017 for which we have provided details separately. For those looking for some last-minute presents their annual range of Christmas cards, a 2017 calendar and impressive alternative gifts is available at their website via <https://www.moneyformadagascar.org/english/shop.asp>.

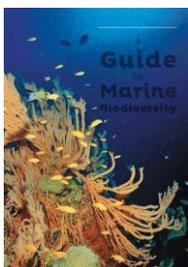
The Friends of Madagascar meeting next year will be on Saturday 6th May 2017 and at a new venue of the Methodist church near Leek Wootton in Kenilworth.



Staff from Wessex Water went to see how donations to WaterAid will help fund water and sanitation projects in the Vakinankaratra region of Madagascar. Last year over £182,000 was raised through volunteers and fundraising efforts while over 25 years customers have helped to raise more than £15 million for similar projects in the world.

In October the Salvation Army started operations in Madagascar, the 128<sup>th</sup> country in which it works.

## Books



Andrew Cooke, who spoke at the Society's October meeting, is also the author of *A Guide to Marine Diversity* in Madagascar which was published by the Wildlife Conservation Society. Those interested in obtaining a copy would be able to contact him via [Andrew@resolve.mg](mailto:Andrew@resolve.mg).