TERJE RØD-LARSEN: Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear friends and dear colleagues, good afternoon, everybody. It is a great pleasure, indeed, to welcome to the International Peace Institute and to the Trygve Lie Center the President of Gabon, Mr. Ali Bongo Ondimba, and of course, also, most welcome to all the members of his delegation. Thank you, Mr. President, for being with us today for participating in our African Leaders Series. IPI started the African Leaders Series three years ago. Our goal is to offer a platform for African statesmen and women to engage with the UN community on key peace and security challenges. That is why, Mr. President, we are extremely pleased that you have accepted our invitation to speak about Gabon’s role in the Security Council during its Council presidency in the month of March. We are all looking forward to you sharing with us your vision of… your vision as the new President of Gabon. Our specific topic today, “Preventing Conflicts, the Need for a Global Strategy of the Security Council,” is of particular importance. We are looking forward to hearing your views on how to develop such a strategy. By way of introduction, let me just say
a few words to mention Gabon’s contribution in addressing crisis in the broader West-African region. As the headquarters of the Economic Community of Central African States, ECCAS, Gabon plays an important role in facilitating diplomatic initiatives and in developing African peacekeeping capacities and capabilities in the region. Indeed Gabon has demonstrated its commitment to these challenges by hosting ECCAS peacekeeping training exercises and Gabon is also contributing to international peacekeeping, including to the UN missions in the Central African Republic and in Chad. Mr. President, we commend these efforts and we look forward to hearing your views on the prevention of conflicts based on these experiences. Before I give you the floor, let me remind you, Mr. President… let me remind you, that the President will give his address in French. We have arranged for dual translation service and you will find headsets available on your chairs, or I can see that they are already in your laps. Following the President’s remarks, my colleague, Warren Hoge, who is the Vice President for External Relations, will moderate the questions and answers session. So it is now my great pleasure to give the floor to President Bongo for his remarks. Mr. President, the floor is yours.

ALI BONGO ONDIMBA: [Translated from the French] Mr. President of the International Institute of Peace, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Ambassadors, Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished guests,

First of all I would like to thank you for the occasion offered to me to address you at this unique point in time marked by the early stages of the Gabon presidency of the United Nations Security Council.

As you know, this month Gabon has the honor and the privilege of presiding over the work of our Council. As with our third mandate, this chairmanship is for us a pleasant opportunity to once again reiterate our serious commitment to the United Nations ideals of peace. The agenda of the Gabonese chairmanship, taking into consideration several fundamental concerns of the Security Council, will have as turning point a public debate about the impact of illicit arms trafficking on the security and peace of Central Africa.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Guests,

The importance of all these questions cannot be sufficiently stressed. But, in addressing you this evening, I would rather concentrate on preventing conflicts, a question of tantamount importance, and one for which the Security Council endeavors to build a global strategy.

The concept of preventing conflicts is now gaining interest. In
fact, the multiple demands made of the United Nations (UN) today show the limits of its capacities to accomplish ever more complex, ever more costly peacekeeping missions.

These limits were mentioned during the debate organized by the Security Council on February 12, 2010 on *transition and exit strategies*. During this debate, many pertinent observations were expressed about the elevated cost of peace missions, about the inflexibility of their mandates, the outlines of which it is necessary to review, and about the missions that endure without yielding conclusive results.

Among many other cases, the RCA offers the most emblematic example of the obsolescence of peacekeeping operations. In fact, for ten years the country has hosted the MISSAB, the MINURCA, the FOMUC, and today the MICOPAX and the MINURCAT, however, without the mandates and their missions having attained the results anticipated by the international community.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished guests,

The difficulties and deficiencies recorded during peacekeeping have revived that wise old expression that says, "it's better to prevent war than make war." The realization of its wisdom urges us to act in advance, to avoid the painful efforts of conflict resolution and the powerlessness and the inconsistency of the denial of intervention. Acting in advance is to prevent.

In our day and age, the efforts of conflict resolution are becoming too costly. They necessarily induce the costs of consolidation and of rebuilding the peace that the prevention would have allowed us to avoid. We must, therefore, build a *global strategy for conflict prevention*.

The Secretaries General of the last forty years have formed the conviction that *the prevention of conflicts* should be the cornerstone of the system of collective security of the United Nations of the 21st century1. Kofi A. Annan said it this way, and I quote, "The United Nations has no goal higher, no commitment deeper, no ambition larger than the prevention of armed conflicts"2, end of quote.

The Security Council finds itself committed in this same direction. With respect to armed conflicts, its annual report for 2001 specifies that "to be most effective, the prevention should be initiated at the earliest possible stage in a cycle on conflict."

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As well, this orientation towards prevention was confirmed several years ago at the highest level of our Organization, specifically at the World Summit of 2005, on the occasion of which the heads of state and heads of government admitted the importance of preventing conflicts.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished guests,

At this moment when the UN is devoting itself to rethinking a genuine culture of prevention, my ambition here is to propose a contribution to the strategy of conflict prevention which it wants to acquire. The time has come for us to pass from theory to practice.

The question here is to determine the proper moment for the Security Council to grab hold of potential situations of conflict in order to avoid the wait-and-see attitude that has too often led to an intervention undertaken too late to apply a preventive solution.

The introduction of an effective early warning mechanism could permit us to take up this challenge. As you know, early warning is the “first component of conflict prevention.” It translates the United Nations’ ambition to pass from a reactive to a proactive strategy of prevention.

In its current state, the system is based on three distinct executive offices, specifically the Interdepartmental Framework for the Coordination of Early Warning and Preventive Action, then the Executive Committee for Peace and Security, and finally the Political Committee of the Secretary General.

As I see it, this system is too dispersed between the Department of Political Affairs, the Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Program for Development. The inevitable result is a too large dispersion of responsibilities, that in fact reduces it's effectiveness.

The Security Council should equip itself with an exemplary and more effective surveillance network. We must create a single entity responsible for keeping watch and sounding a warning. Such entity shall draw on the resources of the regional offices of the United Nations, the network of which shall cover the principal subregions propitious to conflict.

In this regard, the Brahimi report has already suggested the institutionalization of an single entity for the United Nations.

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responsible for alert and warning by proposing the creation of a "Secretary for information and strategic analysis (SIAS)". This novel idea could serve as a basis for our reflection.

We stress however, that the performance of that important entity would depend on its compatibility with the sovereign states but also on cooperation with the national, subregional, and regional systems, including the Central African Rapid Alert Mechanism, which has its seat of operations in my country, the Early Warning Network of West Africa, ECOWARN, and that of East Africa, CEWARM.

Also, I would like to mention that conflict prevention requires increased cooperation from the countries possessing satellites and other sophisticated means of communication able to furnish real-time reliable information permitting better surveillance of - this is not an exhaustive list - rebel movements, trafficking of illegal arms, drugs and other harmful substances, as well as mercenary activity.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Guests,

The capability of early warning to prevent conflicts is undeniable. But its action could also turn out to be ineffective. In either assumption, the role played by the Secretary General, through his assistance and his mediation efforts, remain crucial in his prerogative to alert the Council.

The Security Council, by the fact of its political weight and its decision-making capacity should ensure the first role in the prevention of conflicts. In fact, we know the Security Council can lead political missions for prevention, and as a last resort, decide for a United Nations intervention.

Nevertheless, for the Council to fully play such a role, the Secretary General or the warning entity must regularly provide it with Early Warning Reports on potential conflict situations. Moreover, the Council could hold specific meetings to examine the case of prevention in a sustained and supported manner.

The systemization of preventative operations could also turn out to be effective in reinforcing the Security Council's preventive capabilities. I mention as proof the success obtained by the preventive deployment force of the United Nations in the ex-Yugoslavian republic of Macedonia between 1995 and 1999, and those of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCU) between 1998 and 2000, in which Gabon took part.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished guests,

Permit me to stress here that the Security Council alone cannot prevent conflicts in the long-term. In fact the governments themselves must assume a role just as important. In this sense, it is indispensable that they establish policies of good governance and national unity.

Politically, the lack of democracy will by it's very nature provoke many-sided tensions that will in most cases uncork crises that could lead to civil wars. For this reason we must resolutely consolidate the institutions and guarantee a convention of law to allow citizens to vote.

Economically and socially, the whole world can agree that there will be no peace without development. We must deploy the resources necessary to assure the development of our countries and establish policies of equitable sharing of resources. In this task, cooperation of civil society, particularly women's organizations, could turn out to be the determining factor.

Security being one of the major pillars of stability, it is important to conduct important and significant reforms in this sector aiming to establish strong armies that are well trained, operational and especially republican.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Guests,

At this time, the world finds itself threatened by a new source of conflict against which the preventive approach would appear to be the only viable solution: climate change.

Climate change has an impact not only on the environment, on the health of mankind and the economy, but also on the stability and security of states. Its effects are becoming more manifest when they arise in the developing countries as well as in regions touched by ethnic, cultural, economic, or political strife.

With risks closely linked to the spiral of conflict and the mass migrations that result, climate change contributes to the increase in poverty as well as to instability.

We must rapidly face the problem. In this respect, I encourage governments to adopt long-term strategies that permanently stem the flow of global warming.

Governments must commit with firmness and with determination, as much through adaptation as mitigation. In fact, waiting ever longer without acting will risk maximizing the
cost of that mitigation. Moreover, such a position could make global warming irreversible.

Gabon, for its part, has resolutely taken that path. I seize this occasion to renew our firm support of initiatives that aim to form a broad consensus for a new international accord to fight climate change, as well as for our cooperation with all the partners.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Guests,

In our quest for peace and development, it would appear pressing from now on to give the Security Council consequential means of prevention. It is only in that way that is can effectively fight all sorts of threats to international peace and security. Well structured and well conducted, prevention ensures long-term peace and security and thus guarantees advancement of our states towards development and stability.

I thank you.

WARREN HOGE: Mr. President, thank you very much for those words. We are particularly pleased that you chose IPI as the place to address an audience, here, in the United Nations community. If I may say, I was particularly pleased that you spoke at one point in terms of the last 40 years, because this is our 40th birthday here, at IPI, and IPI, the International Peace Institute, began as the International Peace Academy, and its first mission was to train peacekeepers. So, your emphasis on peacekeeping, your emphasis on early warning and prevention, are words that are very dear to the research mission, here, at IPI. We also hear those words increasingly from the African continent, and that also pleases us. We have a close association, at IPI, with the African Union, and I think it is fair to say that the African community, here, in the United Nations community, views IPI as a place where they are particularly welcome, and their concerns are our concerns. Finally, you mentioned at the end of your speech, that a preventive approach is the only viable solution to climate change. Yesterday in this room, we held a large roundtable meeting of ambassadors and experts from the various missions in the UN community on the subject of climate change, and specifically, on how to carry forward the actions in Copenhagen in December to Cancun, which is the next meeting, to be held in Mexico next December. So your words, I am sure, were well received by this audience. They were certainly well received by those of us at IPI who were very pleased you are here. I would like to throw the floor open to questions for the President. The President has told us he has to leave at 2 o’clock so that gives us 30 minutes or so, and if you would raise your hand and, please wait for the microphone to
get to you, because we are both filming and recording this, and what you asks will not be picked up on the recording unless you ask it with the microphone in your hand, so… I know this woman here, she asks good questions so why don’t you go first, and would you please identify yourself when you ask the question.

**JACQUELINE SPANN:** Thank you very much, Mr. President, for giving me the honor to listen to you. My name is Jacqueline Spann, I am the President of Education and Literacy Fund for Africa, and I welcome your comments. They are very important. What you… how you think, and what you are adding to the UN agenda. My question is this: How do you deal with the personal agendas of various countries in time of conflict? Personal meaning financial, personal meaning taking land and minerals and various things out of other countries? Personal agendas may be unknown and unforeseen, so how do you deal with that and address those issues, included in what you have expressed?

**BONGO:** Thank you. I would simply say that, when it comes to Africa, we have one common goal, which is stability, because we are, all of us, developing countries, and in order to develop our countries, we need peace and stability. So, on our agenda, all of us, all members of the African Union, you will find peace. It is very difficult to pursue one’s own agenda if you do not take into consideration, you know, the stability of the continent. We, in Gabon, for instance, Gabon could, as you mentioned, decide, well, I have my own agenda. We have enjoyed peace, long stability, so we could be very selfish and say, well, we don’t care. We are going to do that. But, you know, in our sub-region, Central Africa, right at our doors, there are problems, civil wars, crisis… So one has to consider that: what happens, in my neighbor’s, you know, [INAUDIBLE] house, would affect me? Because, in terms of trade, in terms also of the problem of mass exodus of populations coming and seeking refuge, and also because we all are connected. So what happens in one country will, of course, affect the other, and for many years, we have tried, you know, to say, well, we don’t care, we have our own agenda. And, it did not work. In my sub-region, Central Africa, it is fair to say that it is probably one of wealthiest, in terms of resources, of the continent, and still, things are not working. Why? Because some of our neighbors are involved in many crisis. And that is why Gabon has always tried to mediate, to help, and now we have Gabonese soldiers in the Central African Republic, but we were also involved in the Congo where we were involved in monitoring. We also did the same in Burundi, and in Chad. So, we all have to do that, otherwise, we will find ourselves, twenty years from now, with the same problems. So, it was very important for us, you know, to… at African Union meetings, to recognize that peace, stability… two
words, very important for the continent, and we have to all work together, achieving, you know, that goal.

[UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER]:

[Translated from the French] Thank you. Earlier, Mr. Larsen welcomed you, Mr. President of the Republic, welcoming you here at the IPI. Let me be a little selfish and express our pride as Africans to welcome you here and hear you talk to us about your concerns and ambitions of Gabon vis-à-vis the United Nations. You have rightly emphasized the preventive dimension, which is a concept that dates back several decades. Prevention is indispensable, prevention is essential and prevention is necessary, but prevention cannot be effective unless it is supported by a mediation mechanism. And within the United Nations, the structure of mediation is still embryonic. Therefore, prevention cannot be without mediation and that mediation should be decentralized, decentralized at the level of the continents but decentralized at the level of sub-regions. Gabon, during the lifetime of your late father, Al Haj Omar Bongo, played an extremely important and moderating role in Africa in general and not just in your area. And the question, I think, that everybody asks is... to see Gabon, under your authority, continue this moderating role, this stabilizing role, and I would like to know the intentions of the President of the Republic in this regard.

BONGO:

[Translated from the French] Good. Thank you for your speech. Clearly, as I indicated earlier, the fate of various African countries is important to us. Also, it is absolutely vital for us to see all our countries know lasting peace. President Omar Bongo Ondimba, God rest his soul, was actually very involved in a number of mediations. And I agree with you, namely that prevention rhymed with mediation, but in most cases we observed that if we could... when President Omar Bongo could act quickly, as soon as possible, difficulties were not as significant and the results were much easier, I mean, less difficult to achieve. So I agree with your concerns by saying that this role of Gabon is important and we will commit ourselves to continue in this way. Gabon cannot remain indifferent to the fate of... one, its neighbors, and even other countries, therefore, the continent. And insofar as we are welcome, we will always try, in particular, to bring the parties to a dialogue. It is important to ensure that the parties are talking, to avoid misunderstandings, because misunderstandings can lead us, sometimes, to very serious conflicts. So we will continue our efforts within the African Union and sub-regional organizations to continue in this way, which is the only one. This is the only way possible for Gabon, like for all the other countries, to give peace an additional chance. So in this sense you can always count on the presence of Gabon in that context.
AGNES MARCAILLOU: [Translated from the French] Excellency, Mr. President. It is a pleasure and an honor to see you, but above all a pleasure, again. Welcome to New York. My name is Agnès Marcaillou and I would like to follow the path the previous speakers have traced and especially you, Mr. President. You have spoken of misunderstanding and prevention related to the resolution of the misunderstanding. I would like to contribute a new element to prevention, namely greed. Your sub-region, unfortunately, Mr. President, is a rich sub-region. You not only have an extraordinary human wealth, but you have resources which, for some of them, are unique. And we all know wealth attracts the envy of neighbors or uncontrolled elements among neighbors. Traffickers of all kinds and especially arms traffickers feast, Mr. President, as you know, they live like kings in Central Africa. I was wondering if, through your actions and your thinking about prevention, if finally, a multilateral management board of the resources in countries not only potentially at risk, but I believe that potentially it is already outdated. We know the country is at risk, we know that the borders are impossible to manage and monitor. They are much too long. Your countries are immense. Is this a line of thinking that you have already conducted or would be interesting to pursue? Why not, Mr. President? Thank you.

HOG: Wait... I know who you are, but the rest of the room does not. Would you please identify yourself?

MARCAILLOU: Agnès Marcaillou.

HOG: Thank you.

BONGO: [Translated from the French] Listening to you, should we conclude that it is better to be poor and not have wealth? [LAUGH]. Let’s say... it is important and in the sub-regional context, we now have many more discussions on economic development and actually we are trying with all our sub-regional neighbors, to have... to look a little to the future and to some extent, to harmonize the development a little bit. This is not easy because each country has its own interests, its own strategies and we have to do things so as not to... to avoid stepping, trampling on the sovereignty of all parties. But the thinking goes in the sense that, in some cases, if a State is going to develop a major project, this project could have a sub-regional dimension and especially, perhaps, avoid that another State, or that two other States do the same project, which would reduce the scope of this project, in the sense that we are now trying to organize sub-regional markets. So we try to think in this sense but it is not easy. We are making good progress and we are already moving with the idea of some sub-regional projects, especially in certain sectors. Thus, we have a joint thinking regarding the forest, wood, and as we try this in other
sectors, be it energy, very important, and as I said, climate issues, also lead us to think together, and also security issues. We have seen much progress since we have been doing this. We have made progress and we will certainly continue on this path which I believe is the best.

HOGE: The gentleman behind you raised his hand first, right there? Yes. And then…

KIM BONG-HYUN: Thank you Mr. President. My name is Kim Bong-hyun. I am the DPR of the Republic of Korea’s mission. I really… this is my distinct honor for me to ask a question to Your Excellency, President Bongo of Gabon. We have… the Republic of Korea has a very good relation with Gabon for a long time and I clearly, remember that… when I was a young student, your President visited Korea and I took to the street to welcome your President. I was a very good memory for me and still, I am very happy to see the good relation with the country of Gabon. When the Republic of Korea first made our own car, the name was Bongo… [LAUGH], so it is a very popular car. The name is Bongo because your President visited Korea and it was a very good memory for me as well. [LAUGH] Thank you very much for the preventive diplomacy. This is very important for the safety and security of the world. And also, I very carefully listened to your view on the rule of law for prevention of the conflict. In this regard, I would like to say that the regional organization of Africa, the African Union, should contribute to the stability of the African country, African continent as a whole, and also, the cooperation between the African Union, as the regional organization, and the United Nations, also is very, very important. In this regard, I would like to ask you, Mr. President, what is your vision, when we talk about the rule of law in the African continent? How do you visualize your vision for the rule of law? For example, we need to institutionalize the rule of law. As the regional organization, the African Union, maybe, announcing the kind of covenant among the members of the African Union, that, for example, the military coup d’état cannot be recognized by the African Union as a whole. We have a very similar example in the [PH] Caribbean states that if any country establishes its government by an unconstitutional way, then the whole… the members of the African Union cannot recognize the country… the government. How do you… how is your vision about the rule of law in the African Union? Thank you.

BONGO: That concern of yours has already been taken into consideration by the African Union. We have moved a long way, you know, from the OAU to the African Union and the African Union position is very clear when it comes to the rule of law. The African Union condemns any coup d’état, condemns, you know, access to power by force. And that is the case already in some countries where the African Union has made strong
statements and where we... some states are working with the African Union to try to find solutions. That is the case in Madagascar, for instance, and of course, the problem in Niger, Guinea... so in all these different places, the position of the African Union is very clear. We, you know, governments, have to give our organization, our pan-African organization, you know, more power and more means in order to be able to, not only make strong statements, and to be able to intervene somewhat, you know, and the African Union also needs to be supported by other regional organizations and by the United Nations. Meaning that as long as, you know, the African Union will not recognize a so-called government, you know, then nobody else will do it. So it should be that way. But we are pleased to see that the organization is moving towards that and that has already been the case regarding some countries and unfortunately, we are seeing now too many cases, you know, of coup d'états. We have witnessed that in the past, you know, six months or so, and this is very troublesome. But we support, you know the African Union organization and it is already a principle now that, in Africa, we will not recognize a government, you know, that has come to power by sheer force, or by coup d'état, it is already a principle. So we are moving towards the right direction but, you know, you have to admit that those are complicated matters and we need, then, to be very supportive of our organization. And thank you, by the way, for remembering us about the President Bongo’s visit to Korea. I was surprised myself because lately, as... the Defense Minister, we made, you know, acquisitions of medical equipment, mobile, you know, medical equipment and I was surprised to see on the car... it was now... Bongo 3. [LAUGH].

HOGE: The gentleman in the third row, here

ANATOLIO: [Translated from the French] Salam, Mr. President Ali Bongo Ondimba. My name is Anatolio Ndong Mba, Permanent Representative of Equatorial Guinea to the United Nations and currently Chairman of the African Group. This is not a question but first, on behalf of the African Group, we welcome you here in New York to express to you how much your presence and your words are used as ingredients for us, for our work, and also to express all the support that the African Group which, incidentally, is very united here, as part of the regional group at the United Nations, intends to give to the Gabonese presidency at the Security Council. Especially during this year when the African Union dedicates itself to peace efforts, as Mr. Ping said during his last trip here. Excellency, allow you [sic: us] to express to you on this opportunity, to renew our congratulations and wishes of success in your high office and why not, we are very pleased with your words because prevention, actually, is the dialogue that your father, His Excellency Al Haj Omar Bongo, deceased, has always maintained. We are glad that
you, Excellency, take the same path. Thank you very much, Your Excellency.

**BONGO:**

[Translated from the French] I thank you and I just want to say that it is quite normal for Gabon to maintain this policy and I believe that all our… all the African brothers would be… would obviously point their finger at me and would have, how should I say, attacked me if I had not followed the policy of the late Omar Bongo on the path of mediation, wisdom and peace. I think you would have given me no other choice but to follow on that path.

**HOGE:**

And this will have to be the last question. Thank you.

**JEAN-FRANCIS : RÉGIS ZINSOU**

[Translated from the French] Thank you, I am the chargé d’affaires of the mission of Benin.

**BONGO:**

[Translated from the French] Speak a little louder.

**ZINSOU:**

[Translated from the French] … the mission of Benin. It is an honor for us, Mr. President, to have you with us and for you to inform us… to share your views on conflict prevention. Somebody before me spoke of greed, spoke of resources and riches and I would like to continue a little in this sense and ask: In your vision of conflict prevention, what place do you reserve, precisely to [INAUDIBLE] the big powers that manipulate and still manage our resources and which in fact are the true artisans of conflicts in our countries. This is my question, Mr. President, I would like to know. Thank you.

**BONGO:**

[Translated from the French] I would simply say that prevention mechanisms are important and therefore I believe that I have… we all agree on this. Greed is one thing, but you may crave and it remains silent, or you can be active. When you crave, it means you want something. There are different ways to do it. We have nothing against greed. But in this case, one comes officially, normally, one comes to say well, you have this wealth in your country and I am interested. At that moment, there are instruments which are those of all countries, and that is how commerce works, this is how business works. One can say well, good, that’s it, I am interested, what must I do? The greed you speak about, unfortunately, is like some people who see a beautiful woman pass by, they crave her. Well, good, there are two ways… either you court her and she says yes or you use force and then it’s rape… and there, you speak of rape. [LAUGH] Rape must be punished. But I would say that in the case of States, unfortunately, we have a part of responsibility in it. It is… somebody may crave, but this does not mean that he will succeed and unfortunately, in certain cases, it is us who are wrong, it is us who open, not the door but the window for it to be done. Unfortunately, the greed of some meets sometimes the
political aspirations of some people who therefore tell
themselves, well, by helping... by helping this power to obtain
what it wants, I will also get what I want because that power will
help me. That is the entire problem, in which I also spoke about
this... the supervision of everything that should happen and
also about mercenaries. If we have chosen to speak about arms
trafficking in the Security Council, it is also to tackle that
problem. Because it is important that, as part of prevention, we
are able to speak clearly, loud and clear, and for everybody to
take this same path. Unfortunately, we often see people who
have trouble feeding themselves, trouble feeding their family,
trouble feeding their people, get weapons and when we know
the cost of these weapons, often the question is... but how do
they do it to buy them? I have always been surprised because,
as former Minister of Defense, when I looked a little to the issue
of the acquisition of weapons, but when I saw the cost, for
some... for some of these weapons, for me the costs were
prohibitive and yet, you will agree with me that Gabon is not
without means and yet, I refrained because of the cost. But we
see elsewhere armed groups that have modern weaponry that
some regular armies do not have and there effectively is the
question, but how do they do it? Unfortunately, it is often there
that we get to [INAUDIBLE]. Then, either we all want to live on a
continent at peace where the lawful state reigns and, at that
moment, everybody contributes and what is requested from the
Africans is very important, and we say that we, Africans, must
make the effort ourselves, must make the effort of creating all
those conditions, but we also say, it is imperative for us to be
helped and we cannot have a double language, say that
Africans must take care of the business of Africans and that
they must put order in their country, that they must put...
respect good governance, good management, fight against
corruption, and on the other side speak with another language
because we have greed. Well, there is the true problem, and I
think that the fact that we speak about it, that we discuss it, that
we set up all these prevention mechanisms, is going to... is
going to help us put an end, unfortunately, to this aspect of the
things that you mentioned. It is one of the important problems
but, as I said, we are still not going to regret that we have a
certain number of resources. It is simply up to us to be able to
better handle them, manage them and assure that we create an
environment that is also political, in other words, lawful state,
good governance, transparency, all these mechanisms set up
will also have consequences on the business environment. It is
not possible to get things under the table in a country where the
system now is going towards more transparency and is going
towards better management and therefore is going... to fight
against corruption. So, that is all we are going to do on that
side, which is also going to reduce the aspects that you spoke
about.
**HOGE:** Mr. President, I owe you an exit from this room two minutes ago, so we will keep the promise. The size of this crowd which, I think, is the largest I have seen in the year and a half that I have worked here, is evidence of the intense interest in your visit. I want to thank you not only for appearing here, but for answering questions and speaking with such candor, and with such humor. So, once again, welcome and all the best to you.

**BONGO:** I would like to thank the Institute for giving me this opportunity to address, you know, all of you, on matters, you know, of importance to my country and sharing with you some of my thoughts, you know. Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity.