

# PRIME MINISTER

## JOINT STATEMENT WITH THE PRESIDENT OF GABON

Prime Minister Gillard today warmly welcomed President Bongo and his delegation to Australia.

Leaders agreed that the visit, the first by a President of Gabon, was a clear sign of the growing friendship between the two countries and reflected the growth of opportunities, political and commercial, in the bilateral relationship.

They welcomed growing bilateral contact, including recent visits to Gabon by the Prime Minister's Special Envoy and to Australia by Gabon's Permanent Representative to the United Nations.

Prime Minister Gillard and President Bongo welcomed the strong growth in trade in recent years, amounting to \$910 million in 2011.

Gabon is now Australia's third-largest two-way trading partner in sub-Saharan Africa.

Leaders noted that Australia and Gabon faced similar policy challenges in managing growing natural resources sector.

President Bongo welcomed the assistance Australia was providing to Gabon in strengthening natural resources governance through the Mining for Development Initiative.

Prime Minister Gillard and President Bongo welcomed growing commercial interest by Australian mining companies in Gabon, noting this was an important plank of the bilateral relationship.

President Bongo welcomed Australian companies' interest in developing iron ore and manganese deposits in Gabon.

Prime Minister Gillard noted that the skills and capabilities of Australia's mining industry were world class and welcomed interest by Australian companies in helping to accelerate the development of Gabon's mining sector.

Leaders identified food security as an increasingly important issue to both countries. President Bongo welcomed the contribution that the Australian International Food Security Centre would make to this effort and registered Gabon's interest in working closely with the Centre to improve food security.

Prime Minister Gillard and President Bongo agreed on the importance of sustained efforts by the international community to address climate change and deforestation, noting the vulnerability of both countries to these threats.

They agreed to work closely together in multilateral and other contexts to advance work on a new global climate change agreement, following on from the commitments made at Durban. President Bongo welcomed Australia's measures to reduce carbon emissions.

Leaders discussed a range of common security challenges, including piracy in the Indian Ocean and Gulf of Guinea and the situation in Somalia.

President Bongo acknowledged the valuable contribution Australia was making to address peace and security issues in Africa and welcomed Australia's increased engagement in Africa more broadly.

Prime Minister Gillard and President Bongo agreed to take further steps to strengthen the bilateral relationship, including increased consultations and contact between Ministers and officials on bilateral issues and issues of international interest.

**SYDNEY**  
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