A M A D E
ASSOCIATION MONDIALE DES AMIS DE L'ENFANCE
PRESIDENTE : S.A.R. LA PRINCESSE DE HANOVRE

Passau, December 12th 2011

Verehrte Gäste,

Sehr geehrte Frau Karin Seehofer,

Verehrte Gastgeber und Verleger Angelika und Dr. Dr. Axel Diekmann,

Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren,

Guten Abend,

zunächst möchte ich mich gerne bedanken bei unserer Gastgeberin, Frau Angelika Diekmann, bei Botschafter Claude Giordan und bei Konsul Alexander Liegl, die sich so sehr darum bemüht haben, dass dieser Abend ein voller Erfolg wird.

Ich bin sehr glücklich und stolz vor ihnen allen als Präsidentin von AMADE zu stehen. Heute Abend haben Sie entschieden, der Arbeit, die unsere Organisation seit ihrer Gründung im Jahr 1963 geleistet hat, Anerkennung zu zollen. Die Entstehung von AMADE verdanken wir meiner Mutter, Fürstin Gracia Patricia von Monaco, und dem persönlichen Engagement des kürzlich verstorbenen Erzherzogs Otto von Habsburg, dessen menschliche Qualitäten als Präsident von AMADE während der ersten Gründungsjahre äußerst wichtig waren.

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ORGANISATION NON GOUVERNEMENTALE DOTEE DU STATUT CONSULTATIF DE L'UNICEF, DE L'UNESCO, DU CONSEIL ECONOMIQUE ET SOCIAL DES NATIONS UNIES (CAT.II) AINSI QUE DU STATUT PARTICIPATIF AU SEIN DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE.

For almost fifty years, AMADE has been running its activities in a discreet but yet concrete way, and I hardly imagine that would have been possible without the devotion and the commitment of extraordinary - most of time anonymous - people. People like our volunteers around the world. People like our field partners, the members of our network, our faithful donors… People like Spès Nihangaza and Francis Kasasa, whom I'd like to thank for being here with me this evening.

Their daily generosity and their selflessness give us the necessary strength to keep struggling to the benefit of the most vulnerable children, and I know they are deeply touched and delighted by the recognition you bestow tonight on their tireless efforts.

Since many years, AMADE shows its capacity to answer the evolving challenges born from the terrible living conditions of the worldwide children. Through that long and neverending journey, our motto has always been to remain loyal to the core values leading our actions and ensuring their relevance. Let me share some of these values with you:

- My mother firmly believed that **love** is the first ingredient a child needs to blossom, and it still perfectly makes sense to me. Children in need are more than everything in need of love. It is by making them feel loved and cared that we will allow them to become responsible grown-ups. Think about it… and look around you, in our developed society - look how misloved children suffer from loss of references. Child-advocacy starts here, through love, comfort and care.

- AMADE also strives to give priority to **dialogue and exchange** with the communities – because considering that we have the right answers to every issue would be the biggest mistake to make. True long-lasting solutions only rise from listening, sharing and respect. There is a wonderful energy and force in the local cultures, an energy that just needs a little bit of our help to become even more efficient. By acting as a catalyst, AMADE makes sure the beneficiaries of its actions are above all actors of their own development. Burundian people use to say: “what you do without me, you do it against me”. That is definitely not our purpose.

- By giving priority to the **autonomy** and **commitment** of our beneficiaries, we make sure our programs make a **long-term impact** in the emerging countries. The actions we develop find their place in a more global effort dedicated to a sustainable development and more self-sufficiency. Within this objective, education and training are central levers in most of the programs initiated or supported by the AMADE network around the planet.

Through all the energies and inspirations gathered, AMADE have had many successes of which we can be justly proud. But while I’m glad to see success, however small, what interests and motivates me more is all that hasn’t been done. To look back or to look ahead is a choice one makes – in my opinion, efficiency commands us to look ahead.

To keep that in mind, we just have to consider how deeply and crucially the challenges we have to face have evolved for the last years. Evolved and increased. There is

something painfully frustrating to notice that, despite the considerable amount of child-support actions that have been initiated, despite all the ideas, all the efforts, despite all the work accomplished by the governments, the international institutions and local associations for decades… our children look more endangered today than ever before.

Alarming is what the present numbers have to be called. More than 600 000 children under the age of five still die every month for lack of incredibly simple and cheap healthcare materials – this is more than the number of babies born in Germany last year…

Obstacles on our way are legion. Their names are poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition, war, violence, sexual exploitation… and their number is still growing every day. There is so much left to be done…

For Alfred Döblin, « the world is made of sugar and dirt ». I suppose this is a wise statement, but I think dirt is a flavour a child should never have to taste, not as long as we have the ability to sweeten his life.

Every one of us has the ability to make a difference in the fight - some might call this our "humanitarian duty". An expression I would like to banish. We should speak of our human duty. Because we are human beings, our guiding principle should always be the quality of the legacy we shall leave to those who will inherit this ever smaller planet of

ours. Because rescuing children only to hand them a world in turmoil and the bleakest of futures is morally intolerable.

So much to be done. That should be done. That can be done. Each of us, in unspectacular ways, can be an agent of positive change by making simple choices every day. Civil society is such a source of innovative solutions, new ideas, new approaches. The real evolution the world needs can emerge from you, from your willingness and motivation to act, now, for every child of this world.

There are so many areas where we can and must committ ourselves to improvement or fundamental change. Because they have a direct impact on the living conditions of our children. Just to mention a few of them:

- There would be a lot to say about our **economic system** and how it has proved its limits and its aptitude to irresponsibility. The crisis that shakes the financial world will strike the generations to come in a way we can't even determine for the moment. What is certain is the fact that developing countries will have to pay a prize, and whatever the prize will be, it will be too high. This economic context will induce dire consequences on the children – children not even born yet, whose chances in life are already in jeopardy.
- **Responsible commerce and equitable capitalism**: now the system has no other choice than to move on to more responsibility, and a better distribution of wealth.

- **Micro-financing** and its exciting possibilities in developing countries – think about how incredibly small investments can produce truly significant results. Micro-entrepreneurship is the most appropriate way to dynamize local initiatives and fully respect the benefactors. We can encourage and applause the results obtained so far – we will have a chance to hear more about it later on tonight.
- **Sustainable development** - the expression is meaningful - and **global awareness**. Humanity can not be satisfied with living today without thinking about tomorrow. The developed world and its insatiable demand have pillaged resources for years and left wastelands behind. Each one of us can help make deep changes by simple consumer discipline.
- **Access to education** for everyone. And I mean for everyone. Two thirds of today's illiterate adults are women. One woman on five in the world can not read. And yet, education and knowledge transmission can be done in so many ways, and most of time so easy ways.

My list could go on and on all evening long – each topic on it being one more stone in the pyramid of our responsibilities. It belongs to us to leave a future to our children, and that future has to be better than their present. There is no shortage of good, even great ideas. All we have to do is to make some of them a reality.

Of all countries where AMADE humbly tries to bring its contribution, Burundi is the one where that spirit of initiative and opportunities is the most encouraging.and productive. In a country where children have so much suffered for years, AMADE Burundi and its community network achieve since many years a tremendous work to the benefit of

orphans and vulnerable children. A work I invite you to have a small glimpse of by watching the following video.

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Showing of the video

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They say a picture is worth a thousand words. Let me add a few more words about the country you have chosen to support tonight.

When I was visiting Burundi a few years ago, two matters came to my mind. First, I was alarmed by the situation of children - in a country still to be rebuilt after years of armed conflict, devastated by the AIDS pandemy, more than 800 000 Burundian children are orphans.

But yet, in the same time, I felt a huge amount of relief in the hearts of the families, the mothers, the children I met. Relief after going through war, human tragedy, day-after-day survival. And more important and admirable, what I felt above all in Burundian hearts was a true desire to breathe again, to lick their wounds and to take a fresh start, all together. This is maybe what makes our work so special in Burundi: the braveness and the solidarity of the communities involved in the programs.

Thanks to the extraordinary commitment of every link in that chain of hope, thousands of Burundian children and families are given the chance to create their own future, to give their lives a brand new orientation through access to healthcare, education, professional training and micro-financing.

Burundi is such an example of how togetherness and community work can make a difference and create a real impact. If we want our work to be efficient for children, we have to educate, to cure, to create a secure environment for the families. We have to see the global picture to understand what could make the children's lives better. This is where the role of Burundian people becomes so crucial – to make sure that efforts are made by the Burundian, for the Burudian, heading to the right direction..

Before I let you here more about this magnificent country, I shall not forget to pay a sincere and warm tribute to Spès Nihangaza, and through her to all the members of AMADE Burundi's team, all the volunteers, all the staff members and the community network around the country, for their courage and their dedication.

None of this would be possible without them.

And of course, none of this would be possible without you.... and your support.

Your presence here tonight bears witness to your active belief in the cause of child-advocacy and to your exceptional generosity. AMADE and I shall do our best to be worthy of the honour you bestowed upon us this evening.

I offer you my warmest thanks.