



# PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

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*TO THE MEETING  
WITH NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS  
AT  
THE WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT*

*JOHANNESBURG - SOUTH AFRICA*

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Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear Friends,

Welcome to the Johannesburg French LycØe library, where we will spend what is an important moment for me. This is the only opportunity I have during my time in Johannesburg to meet the men and women who work daily at grass roots level.

All of you, men and women, South African and French, have decided to dedicate your lives to helping others, building a better world, eradicating poverty, fighting disease, firmly establishing democracy and protecting the environment. You embody those values that today's world so often fails to put into practice: humility, solidarity, fraternity and respect for others. In this age that tends to prioritise the economy, you remind us that people should be at the heart of any project. In a world that too easily resigns itself to the persistence of serious poverty, you broadcast a message of altruism and devotion.

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Before handing over to you to find out more about what you do and your reactions to the debates in Johannesburg, I would like share with you a few beliefs that inspired me in coming to this summit.

Our current models have led us into an impasse. I am not against globalisation: it is the movement of life. It brings with it freedom, greater wealth and richer exchanges between people. It is a new face of the human adventure.

Yet without safeguards and rules, it results in the destruction of nature, in other words our way of life. And without solidarity, it increases inequalities between people and allows poverty and intolerable suffering to persist.

We have to invent new models. Models that are more sparing of natural resources so as to restore the ecological balances. Models that take people and their rights more into consideration and pay more heed to social issues such as equality between women and men, child care and protection, respect for



fundamental labour rights and access to health care.

This very slow process, which compels us to break with many habits, calls for a high level of citizen involvement and a resolute commitment by civil society.

In France, the fight for freedom and democracy spanned generations. It was fought by men and women determined to fight every inch of the way against all forms of oppression. Similarly, ecological awareness has grown gradually out of the resolute commitment of prominent figures who have shaken complacent habits and built awareness.

In some ways, this spirit of justice and freedom is similar to the mind-set that inspired the tireless fight against apartheid, which restored dignity to South Africa and its people.

This fight now needs to be fought globally to exact greater democratic, social and environmental requirements from international players.

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My second conviction is that a new chapter has begun in the history of Africa, a chapter of hope and success after so many bitter centuries.

Admittedly, this continent, the cradle of humankind, now looks to be accumulating handicaps. Poverty, disease, civil wars and marginalisation in world trade are too often facts of everyday life in Africa. And yet, following the era of widespread independence, democracy is gradually taking root throughout the continent.

In addition, peace and reconciliation processes are underway everywhere.

The Africans are taking their destiny in hand. They have launched the New Partnership for Africa's Development, NEPAD, which bodes well for an economic takeoff across the entire continent. South Africa played a major role in the conception of this partnership.

And Africa is rich. Rich in its natural resources, which remain a valuable asset even though they have been so long and often plundered and at the mercy of the rent-seeking economy. Rich in its cultures, about which the world knows too little, and which it must honour to invent its own version of modernity. Rich, above all, in the courage of its people, who have endured the ordeals of the past with their heads held high.

Yet Africa needs the international community's help to break with the vicious circles of poverty and underdevelopment. This is the essence of the partnership we concluded between the G8 and Africa in Kananaskis in June. We are no longer working in an assistance framework of one party giving and commanding, which does not work. We are now working on a contractual approach, where two mutually responsible partners assist one another for the common good.



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The undertaking of the African States is to commit to peace, democracy, good governance and sustainable development. The undertaking of the developed countries is that every State committed to this path shall have the resources it needs to finance its development. You are all witnesses to this Pact.

It should be applied first and foremost in the fight against AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. You are all too familiar with the ravages of these diseases, so I won't dwell on them. But my belief is that humanity would be guilty of failure to assist peoples in danger if it did not take action. Since disease is no more inescapable than underdevelopment.

Major progress has been made in recent years. Medicinal product prices have dropped sharply. The World Trade Organisation is starting to discuss how they can be made available to the poor countries in the shortest time possible. Those who maintained that it was impossible to provide treatments to the poorest countries are now seeing that they were wrong and that this goal is within arm's reach.

The political decisions have been made. They now need to be implemented. And I know that we can count on your associations, who work closest to the ground and know what is required for action to be successful, to come up with many projects. Keep fighting as you have done so successfully these past years.

Thank you.

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