



MESSAGE FROM

JACQUES CHIRAC PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC

FOR THE OPENING OF THE WORLD BANK CONFERENCE "SCALING UP POVERTY REDUCTION A GLOBAL LEARNING PROCESS"

SHANGHAI, 26 MAY 2004

Your Excellencies, Mr President of the World Bank, Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Eliminating poverty, ensuring universal access to well-being and creating genuine international solidarity are some of the top priorities in our time.

Here in China, as your conference starts, I am sure that each of you will reflect on the experience of this great country and its great people. Their progress is a source of hope and inspiration for all poor countries. At the start of the twentieth century, China was suffering from war, poverty and runaway population growth. Having overcome a great deal of turmoil, trouble and problems, it has been engaged, for the last quarter of a century, in an outstandingly rapid modernisation process that has won the admiration of the world. There is still a long way to go, but China has already carved out its place as a major political, economic and cultural power and it is willing to assume the responsibilities that come with its newfound status.

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The paradox of our world is that it has never been so rich, prosperous, dynamic and innovative, yet half of mankind is still vulnerable to hunger and one sixth of the world population lives in poverty. This paradox is profoundly shocking. No one can accept it. No one can accept the prospect of a world forever divided between people for whom the future promises everything and so many others who are left in suffering and despair. This is especially true of you here today, who have the task of giving international solidarity a living form.

You are responsible for the effective use of official development assistance. The amounts involved look small compared to the needs and compared to the additional wealth that world economic growth creates each year. You must make the best use of this rare resource to relieve suffering, to open up new prospects for the recipients, to ensure that it is used most effectively.

As you set to work, I would like to share two basic convictions that motivate me and inspire France's policies.

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PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

My first conviction is that solidarity must be one of the main obligations of the international community. This obligation is an ethical one, in an open world where the destinies of nations are interconnected, where anyone can find out what is happening anywhere at any time. It is a matter of common sense, because the world economy as a whole is held back when the lack of development condemns entire regions to poverty and a seeming lack of prospects. It is also a political necessity, because the security and stability of the world are under threat from the reactions of populations that are deprived of their basic rights.

It would be particularly irresponsible to shirk our obligation in terms of solidarity because the fight is not a vain one. Quite the contrary: the examples of South America, Asia and certain African countries clearly show that the battle can be won. That sound economic and social policy backed up by efforts to improve governance can set off a cycle of growth that can radically transform the face of a country and the future of its people in the space of one or two generations.

That is why the commitment we made in New York in September 2000, when we adopted the Millennium Development Goals, is a political and moral imperative for the whole international community, an imperative that applies equally to rich countries and to poor countries.

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My second conviction is that the time for dogmatism, ideology and ready-made solutions has passed. We need to accept the complexity of the real world, the legacy of history, and the diversity of people and nations, which is the wealth of mankind. We need to treat each people, each region as a special case that requires a specific approach. This is why the success of our action depends on forging a genuine partnership, with respect for the identity of all parties, in addition to compliance with the general rules of sound economics and good governance.

We have run up against the limitations of the helper mentality that inspired yesterday's policies. The keys to success are ownership, and the determination to map out one's own road to development.

The commitment we made in Monterrey and the partnership between the developed countries and African countries that we created in NEPAD have opened up a new chapter of confidence and respect that holds out great promise.

The partnership is based on a contract: poor countries shall start conducting policies to achieve good governance, encourage private initiative and establish the critical infrastructures for development, social progress and environmental protection. In exchange, any country committing itself to this path shall be assured of obtaining the necessary funds.



PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

It is clear that the current volume of official development assistance will not be sufficient, despite the increase seen since 2002.

Therefore, France is working to increase the amount of concessionary development financing. It is increasing its budget allocations for this purpose substantially. It is working to promote the search for new financing sources, such as the International Finance Facility or the possibility of international taxation, which the World Bank Development Committee now recognises as a serious proposition. I shall soon refer this matter to the international community.

But the notion of partnership encompasses much more than this. It requires us to muster all of our efforts within the framework of coherent and concerted international and national strategies.

We must work with the UN and the International Financial Institutions and within mutually agreed guidelines to achieve each of the Millennium Development Goals.

We must work under the guidance of local authorities in the developing countries to achieve coordinated use of international assistance.

We must overcome rivalries and ideological quarrels to achieve more flexible and innovative use of the whole range of development instruments and players, whose synergies must be given greater recognition.

In a word, we must learn to be a strong, coherent and united development community, wholly dedicated to the sole goal of eliminating poverty.

Thank you. |