



Speech by Mr Jacques CHIRAC, President of the French Republic to the meeting for the presentation of the report by the world commission on the social dimension of globalization

SPEECH BY MR JACQUES CHIRAC

PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

TO THE MEETING FOR THE PRESENTATION OF THE REPORT BY THE WORLD COMMISSION ON THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF GLOBALIZATION

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Heads of State and Government,
Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Director-General of the International Labour Organization,
Chairperson of the ILO's Governing Body,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The purpose of political action is human progress. It is to guarantee respect for everyone's dignity and give everyone the opportunity for self-fulfilment. We have chosen economic globalization because it bears this promise. In China, India, Brazil and many other countries, the lives of hundreds of millions of men and women are improving with the liberalization of production and trade and the opening up to investment.

Yet how can globalization be justified to workers whose jobs have been relocated? Where is the hope for the millions of men, women and children who eke out their existence in extreme poverty and disgraceful working conditions? Where is the future for all those who remain by the wayside, prisoners of poverty, hunger, disease and illiteracy?

Today, the social question applies as much to the global as to the national level. We should not forget that there is no wealth without initiative and freedom. But neither should we forget that the price of selfishness is rebellion. Before it is too late, let us find the new balances between capital and labour, between individual interest and collective interest, between liberty and rules. We should ensure that the world's unprecedented wealth becomes a vehicle for the integration, rather than exclusion, of the most underprivileged.



This is why I have decided to propose, with President Lula, radically new, but realistic and economically rational approaches to development funding. To put a portion of the wealth generated by globalization to work for poverty eradication, sustainable development and shared prosperity.

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The initiative of the Director-General of the International Labour Organization, this indefatigable campaigner for the dignity of people and workers on the international scene, is also in this same spirit.

I pay tribute to the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, outstandingly co-chaired by the President of the Republic of Finland and the President of the United Republic of Tanzania. France fully subscribes to your views. It proposes that your recommendations be presented to the United Nations, the International Financial Institutions and the WTO in connection with the necessary reforms of these organizations and the 2005 meeting on implementing the Millennium Development Goals.

This, because social concerns should permeate all international action. They should inspire politically committed approaches to improve the consistency and co-ordination of the multilateral system. The creation of a political forum for the economic and social governance of globalization to give the necessary impetus. The creation of a United Nations Environment Organization, since it is first and foremost the poor who suffer the repercussions of the damage inflicted on nature. The assertion of the right to cultural diversity, since the uprooting and erosion of identities are elements of vulnerability and exclusion. The consideration of the social dimension in the work of the WTO, whose rules and rulings increasingly impact on the running of our economies and our societies.

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Over and above the multilateral system, we need to give a boost to social dialogue at global level, to promote the social ethics of globalization.

Entrepreneurship, innovation, risk-taking and the pursuit of profit are an economy's driving forces. They should be encouraged. Yet the constant search for new comparative advantages at national and corporate level is no excuse for a free-for-all. It is unacceptable for human rights, the dignity of work and the future of our planet to become cost adjustment variables. This is a crucial issue.

Overabuse has sounded an alarm, prompting a growing number of businesses to embrace the principles of social and environmental responsibility by subscribing, for example, to the Global Compact launched by the Secretary-General and the OECD guidelines.

However, in the face of totally intolerable practices such as slavery and the exploitation of children, voluntary commitments are not enough. We must, at international level, look into strengthening the legal system governing



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corporate and State responsibility. Let us work in the spirit of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention and the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is no future in globalization that tolerates predatory behaviour and the hoarding of its profits by a minority. There is no future in globalization that destroys the social and environmental balances, crushes the weak and denies human rights. It is up to us to refuse these drifts. And to give globalization a conscience and social ethics to give it its full legitimacy and meaning at the service of humankind.

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