



PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

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ADDRESS BY JACQUES CHIRAC, PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

ON THE OCCASION OF THE PRESENTATION OF NEW YEAR'S GREETINGS FROM THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS

ELYSEE PALACE,

THURSDAY 8 JANUARY 2004

Prime Minister, Ministers, Secretary-General of the Francophonie, dear President Abdou Diouf, Ambassadors, Ladies and Gentlemen,

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Your Excellency, The Papal Nuncio,

Thank you for your kind words which have gone straight to my heart, and for the wise remarks you would like us to consider. After the past jubilee year, I extend to you my very sincere best wishes and ask you to convey to his Holiness Pope John Paul II my deferential greetings and the warm wishes of the French people.

Mesdames et Messieurs les Ambassadeurs,*

I also wish to express my condolences to the Ambassador of Iran, and the sympathy of the French people, in the face of the terrible tragedy that struck the city of Bam and its region. The French, together with the international community, have mobilised in a surge of solidarity with the wounded populations. We shall stand by Iran's side to help it overcome this tragic disaster as soon as possible.

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The year that has just ended was fraught with trials. Faced with the prospect of force being used without the approval of the United Nations, public opinions rallied throughout the world and the international community became divided. The continuation of deadly violence in Iraq is a cause of distress and concern for us all. The impact of the ongoing crisis, to which there can be no solution without the settlement of the conflict in the Middle East, will be felt for a long time yet.

In other regions, grave tensions like those in North Korea and Iran, and the civil wars in Africa, have jeopardised peace and security. The unity of the international community has enabled effective action through a significant



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effort and a strong political, and at times military, commitment.

Yet that year also brought hope.

Hope for a responsible dialogue to face up to the challenges of our time such as globalisation, the fight against poverty, against terrorism, and against proliferation. Such was indeed the spirit that prevailed in Evian..

Hope for increased mobilisation for Africa, through the growing number of NEPAD partner countries.

Hope for the reform of the United Nations that is the keystone of an international order based on peace and prosperity.

Hope for progress in the fight against proliferation, with positive developments observed in Iran and Libya.

Hope for a renewed dialogue among cultures, with the return of the United States to UNESCO and the will to frame cultural diversity law.

Hope for Europe, finally, which will see the so long-awaited enlargement take place and which, despite the obstacles it must overcome, has undertaken to patiently frame a Constitution.

It is with confidence therefore that I start 2004, a year devoted to reviving multilateralism, building a united Europe, a year devoted of course to reducing threats to peace.

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We now know that the confrontation between blocs had placed a mask over the complexity of the world. Now that this mask is broken, we are rediscovering the diversity of peoples, of their cultures and aspirations. At the same time, we are becoming aware of a community of destiny that compels us to find paths to shared responsibility.

Military force was once the argument usually put forward by great powers and it is still legitimate under certain conditions. But it is no longer sufficient to ward off the new threats to global security. For the resentment of peoples, a breeding ground for all forms of violence, is fuelled by unresolved conflicts and the continuation of the denial of due process of law. Resentment is also fuelled by poverty, by the plunder of natural resources, by loss of identity. It heightens in a world where everyone is in a position to know, instantaneously, what is taking place in neighbouring countries or at the other end of the world and to compare.



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The multipolar world is increasingly becoming a reality. Over a few generations, entire nations freed themselves from poverty to set out to conquer prosperity and economic power. They have grouped together in regional entities such as Mercosur and ASEAN. They are attaining modernity, like China which has just launched its first astronaut into space, and India which is carving herself a prominent place in the information society. This trend is growing and we are heading for a world in which political, economic and cultural influence will increasingly be shared. Let us make sure that relations between these poles bringing together countries or groups of countries with global influence do not end up in rivalry, confrontation and hence chaos. Our responsibility today is on the contrary to ensure that these relations shape themselves within a new multilateralism governed by law where the search for harmonious and peaceful relationships will prevail.

2004 must be the year of the United Nations' renewal. UN Member States should prepare to adopt decisions during the next Session of the General Assembly based on the proposals to be made by the wise men who were chosen by the Secretary-General. Last September, I presented in New York France's proposals for a more efficient United Nations better able to address world realities.

The failure at Cancun showed that the reform of the multilateral system should also concern international trade rules. Since we are dealing with the Development Round, let us meet the needs of the poorest countries, starting from this year. Let us define a special regime for Africa, which deserves it and needs it. Let us address the emblematic issue of cotton that has rightly been raised by the Africans themselves. The African continent, abandoned on the fringes of globalisation, should at long last find a place in it through creative exchanges for growth and prosperity.

In the face of growing environmental hazards, an environmental governance should be urgently established on a world scale. Last autumn, France submitted to its partners proposals for creating a United Nations Environmental Organization. In order to advance this project, France has brought together a group of countries determined to make headway in this respect with a view to the forthcoming Session of the General Assembly.

The persistence of poverty and of the scourges that go with it is one of the blatant injustices of our time. It is both immoral and dangerous. I would like the issue of the means required to fulfil the Millennium commitments to be put on the agenda of the G8 Meeting of Heads of State and Government on Sea Island. Together with the Brazilian President and the United Nations Secretary-General, on 30th January next in Geneva, we shall explore ways to better combat hunger throughout the world.

This year, France is to adopt new guidelines for increasing official development assistance which is to be better focused on clearly defined priorities, namely the Millennium Development Goals and support for NEPAD. French official development assistance will be rebalanced around its multilateral, European, and bilateral components, as well as between



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project-aid, programme-aid and technical assistance. Finally, the responsibilities of the various operators will be clarified.

All avenues must be explored to marshal indispensable additional financial resources for development, given that official aid will evidently remain insufficient. In the spring, France will present to its partners the conclusions on new sources of international financing, particularly taxation of financial exchanges, issued by the group of qualified personalities I have brought together. France will also organise, together with Great Britain, a conference in Paris on the International Finance Facility, a potentially useful mechanism that will make it possible to tap financial markets.

Last November, we convened the new Africa Partnership Forum in Paris. In 2004, France would like this body to give decisive impetus to efforts initiated in Africa to further peace, good governance, economic growth and human development. The Conference of Heads of State of Niger Basin Countries, to be hosted in Paris next April, will be held in this connection.

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2004 will also be the year of a Europe that has come together again with the accession of ten partners in May; of a renewed Europe, with the first elections to the European Parliament of the enlarged Europe, to be followed in the autumn by the forming of the next Commission.

The advent of this great Europe will first cause peace and democracy to take root in our continent, this being an essential objective of that great project. It brings the promise of more sustained growth and of intensified exchanges between peoples. It will also entail the adoption by our new partners of higher standards in terms of food, maritime and nuclear security, and the development of strengthened disciplines against organised crime and illegal immigration.

France looks forward with confidence to the metamorphosis of Europe, to this new era of shared freedom, security and prosperity. I am visiting Hungary next month, an exemplary country in the great change successfully implemented by the countries today acceding to the European Union.

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The new Europe should also be a Europe that moves forward while continuing its integration. It needs a Constitution to function effectively, meet the expectations of citizens and better assert itself in the world. The Nice Treaty was an essential prerequisite to enable Union enlargement within the agreed time frame. Our goal today is utterly different, namely to adopt a new political project for the peoples of Europe, a project embodying a vision of and an ambition for Europe, and providing a framework for joint European action over the next decades.



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To act and make headway, Europe needs clear and legitimate majorities. European construction relies on solidarities, not on blocking capacities. This requirement also presupposes that the Commission may continue to embody European general interest and that the Council avert as far as possible the risks of paralysis that the unanimity rule may entail at 25.

This is the ambition suggested by the Convention on the Future of Europe and shared by a great many countries, including some of those which are to join the European Union next May. In Brussels last month, we were led to agree on an extension to continue the work of the Intergovernmental Conference. This time for reflection should not mean inaction on our part. I rely fully on the Irish Presidency to present us with a fair assessment of the situation during the European Council meeting to be held next March with a view to all of us reaching an agreement on the Constitutional Treaty. France will fully support the Irish Presidency.

We are also well aware of the fact that within Europe at 25 and soon 27 and more, all will not be able to progress at the same pace. The more hesitant countries should not slow down those determined to go further and faster. Germany and France will of course be at the core of pioneer country groups. And I hope that we will be able to follow that path together with the other founding countries, as well as with Great Britain and all those old and new member States which wish to give Europe that extra spirit and strength.

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The progress made in the area of defence has strengthened our belief that Europe is above all a matter of political will, such as that which helped to launch the European Union's first two military operations in Macedonia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is that same will which makes it possible to develop the Union's capability to plan and conduct autonomous operations, while strengthening its relationship with the Atlantic Alliance which of course remains the basis for European collective defence.

At the NATO Summit in Istanbul next June, I shall reaffirm France's determination to play its full role in the transformation of the Alliance, in particular through the NATO Response Force (NRF) of which, I note, France will be one of the first and leading contributors. I shall also recall that an alliance is never as strong as when it is respectful of the position of all its members.

The sixtieth anniversary of the Normandy Landings one of the founding events of the Transatlantic link will be an occasion for celebrating the community of values that unites democracies and transcends rivalries of the past. This is why I am pleased that the Federal Chancellor of Germany has accepted my invitation to attend this event. It is also out of loyalty to these values that we shall celebrate the centenary of the Entente cordiale in London and Paris this year.



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Reducing threats to peace first means addressing unresolved conflicts.

In 2003, stability was again a little further undermined in the Middle East. Yet, it is in that cradle of civilisations that the world's future is being decided to a great extent.

In Iraq, the military intervention put an end to a loathsome regime. Saddam Hussein's arrest helped to turn the page of this dictatorship. But who can fail to see the chain reactions set in motion by this intervention? Today, we are looking to the future. Our common objective is to establish a sovereign, stable, prosperous and democratic Iraq living within its borders, in peace with its neighbours. That is our objective.

Achieving this objective will call for a great deal of clear-sightedness, courage and determination from everyone. We shall win or lose all together. No solution can be envisaged that does not provide for as rapid as possible a transfer of sovereignty to the Iraqis themselves, since the sentiment of being occupied continues to arouse the same reactions, at all times and in all places. It is essential for the international community to be greatly involved through the United Nations, as it alone will impart full legitimacy to the transition process that is being launched and will help initiate the efforts to achieve the political and economic reconstruction of the country on solid foundations.

In this spirit, France is of course prepared to contribute to the collective action for Iraq, at the request of the Iraqis themselves, to meet the needs of populations and with a view to the establishment of a fully sovereign government.

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In the Middle East too, let us be lucid: progress in terms of peace, security and democracy throughout the region necessarily calls for the settlement of this issue on a fair and lasting basis.

The parties involved should be bold and brave, following the example of the promoters of the Geneva Initiative. Such progress can be achieved other than through terrorism, violence, the rejection, destruction and humiliation of others.

The international community should now do its duty. Let it demonstrate, through the Quartet, its will to see the principles it has itself set out translated into concrete actions. Let it show its determination by convening an international conference that would help the parties to again set the negotiating dynamic in motion on the basis of the road map. Finally, let it put



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in place the monitoring mechanism, a prelude to a truly international presence without which no progress can be achieved. France is ready for all this.

Today, more than ever, time is running short in the Middle East. Resentment, hatred, and incomprehension are growing. A wall is being built that divides even more than it separates. Playing for time means prolonging the sufferings endured by peoples. After so many years, so much misfortune, 2004 must be a decisive stage towards bringing into existence in 2005 two States living side by side and in security.

To fulfil all its promises, that process will of course have to be global and extend to peace between Israel and its other neighbours, Syria and Lebanon. You are also aware of France's commitment to the restoration of Lebanon's full sovereignty. We hope that significant progress will be made in this direction in 2004 by all the parties concerned.

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It is moreover imperative to restore civil peace in the African countries and regions beset by crises. France is firmly committed to supporting all processes for appeasement, dialogue, disarmament and reconstruction, as in Côte d'Ivoire where we have called on all the parties to fully implement the Marcoussis Agreements and for a United Nations peacekeeping force to be deployed to ensure complete disarmament. In the same spirit and with the same conviction, we support transition in the Central African Republic.

Developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the prospect of an international conference on the Great Lakes region of Africa are reason for us to be hopeful. France will fulfil all its commitments to Africa.

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Beyond immediate crises, reducing threats to peace also involves facing the danger of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Europe is playing an active role in this collective effort. Already, the British, the French, and the Germans, in close liaison with their Russian and American partners, have induced Iran to shed all light on its nuclear programme and initiate strengthened cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency. I welcome the recent signature by Iran of the Additional Protocol. We will of course ensure compliance with the commitments made, for they are a precondition for peace and will enable the development of Iran's energy industry in a climate of mutual confidence.

The commitments made by Libya regarding the renunciation of weapons of mass destruction will help to renew stability in the region. France welcomes this and hopes that the expected settlement of the dispute over the UTA DC-10 will enable Libya to fully contribute to the dynamic of cooperation between the two shores of the Mediterranean.



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Likewise, the peaceful settlement of the North Korean issue implies the success of the efforts deployed at China's instigation to convince Pyongyang to accept putting a complete, irreversible and verifiable stop to its nuclear military activities.

In view of all these positive developments, it is more essential than ever now for each State to subscribe to the international rules on non-proliferation and to abide by its commitments, failing which it will be excluded from the international community. These developments also make it all the more essential to correct the gaps and shortcomings in the anti-proliferation arrangements to which we should give more coherence, strength and legitimacy. Let us take advantage of the growing consensus among the international community to adopt a United Nations action plan against proliferation, and convene, in due course, a special meeting of the Security Council to give a strong impetus to its implementation.

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Finally, promoting peace means building new solidarities between the major poles of the world.

As the Union's immediate neighbour, Russia has opted for democracy and reform. We are going to breathe life into the four Common Spaces defined at Saint Petersburg. I would like all of us to work together, particularly as regards the movement of persons and energy. Strong and confident cooperation between Russia and the European Union is crucial to global stability.

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Our neighbours on the Southern Shore of the Mediterranean ought to benefit from preferential treatment in their relations with Europe as I recalled during my recent visits to Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. France, which has made proposals to relaunch the Euro-Mediterranean relationship, is very attentive to this.

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In Asia, we will intensify our strategic consultations with India and Japan, and I shall visit Hanoi on the occasion of the fifth ASEM Summit. President Hu Jintao's forthcoming state visit to Paris, as the highlight of a brilliant Year of China in France and of the celebration of the fortieth anniversary of the establishment of our diplomatic relations, will be an opportunity for me to hail the extraordinary potential of the relations between Europe and the major pole of tomorrow's world that is China.

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Finally, France is especially committed to the solidarity among French speakers uniting peoples from all parts of the world through a common language, a common history and common values. The summit we are going to hold in Ouagadougou, to



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which I attach the utmost importance, will help to promote that solidarity at the service of cultural diversity and sustainable development.

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Nuncio, Ambassadors, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The principles of wisdom affirmed at San Francisco following the sufferings and the ravages of the Second World War are more than ever relevant. They have helped to base the legitimacy of the international order on universal values and on common rules. Out of loyalty to these principles and the ideals of peace and progress by which France is inspired, it is for States to today breathe new life into the construction of a new international order. May the year 2004, the year of the bicentenary of Victor Schoelcher's birth, the year of the bicentenary of Haiti's independence, and the year chosen by UNESCO to commemorate the combat against slavery and its abolition, be that of the advancement of Human dignity.

This is the message I ask you to transmit, with my warmest personal wishes, to all your Heads of State and Government and to all the peoples you represent so well here. To each and every one of you, I also convey my most sincere wishes for your happiness and prosperity.

Thank you. |