



# PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

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SPEECH  
BY JACQUES CHIRAC  
PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC  
FOR  
THE CHRISTENING  
OF THE AIRBUS A380  
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TOULOUSE HAUTE-GARONNE  
TUESDAY, 18 JANUARY 2005

Dear Prime Minister Blair,  
Dear Federal Chancellor Schröder,  
Dear Prime Minister Zapatero,  
Prime Minister,  
President of the Greater Toulouse Council, dear Philippe Douste-Blazy,  
Ministers,  
Chairman of Airbus,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The christening of the A380 is a moment of pride and emotion for all of us. The launch of this giant of the airways is the crowning achievement of a fantastic human and industrial adventure. A European adventure of perseverance, innovative spirit and ardent determination.

On this highly symbolic day, I salute the memory of a great entrepreneur: Jean-Luc Lagardère. The aeronautical plant where we stand, which is the largest in Europe, bears his name. There could be no finer homage to him. To this remarkable project, he devoted all his talent, energy, and a power of conviction that belonged only to him.

With the launch of the A380, Jean-Luc Lagardère's dream, this European and national dream, has come true. It is a magnificent human creation. It is a technological feat. And it is a great European success.

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The vastness of this plant gives an idea of the challenge that the A380 represented. This gigantic airliner will go down in aviation history, like Clément Ader's Eole, the Caravelle and the Concorde.

With an 80-metre wingspan, the A380 is the largest civilian aircraft ever built. It will be able to carry up to 800 passengers over a distance of almost 15,000 kilometres.

This technical feat also proved to be an environmental challenge. The A380 is a model in this regard. Even before the international community established rules to limit greenhouse gas emissions from aircraft, its designers made the A380 one of the cleanest aircraft in the world, alongside, I note, another Airbus,



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the A330. This was a decision of responsibility and sense. It is now urgent to set international standards in this field.

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The A380 is also and above all a magnificent human adventure. Giving substance to this visionary project required 200,000 people working together: 150,000 in Europe and more than 50,000 in the United States and Asia.

I would like to express my thanks to Jean Pierson, Jürgen Thomas, Charles Champion and Noël Forgeard for their decisive role at the helm of this magnificent project. I extend my gratitude to the client airlines of Airbus, which enabled the A380 to become a reality by demonstrating their confidence from the earliest stages of its design.

Today I share the enthusiasm, the emotion and the deserved pride of all the men and women who are part of this immense industrial success story. The engineers, journeymen, assemblers, and sales and administrative staff of Airbus and its suppliers. All of you, who have given the best of yourselves to bring this aeroplane into being, I pay you the warmest homage. Whether you work in Germany, the United Kingdom, Spain, France or other countries, notably in Europe, it is your common dream that is taking shape here at AØroConstellation, the A380 assembly site. This is the culmination, I know, of years of effort, imagination, sacrifice and willpower. It is thanks to your dedication and passion that the A380 has been produced and to schedule.

Thanks to you, Toulouse, the centre of excellence of the French aeronautical industry and birthplace of this A380 built by you, has become truly European. All of you, regardless of your nationality, share the same goal. This city belongs to all of you.

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The adventure of the A380, your adventure, is a great success for Europe.

First of all, it is the success of a European company: EADS, the parent company of Airbus with BAE Systems, is probably the first truly European company, in its ownership structure, its working methods and the common culture that has developed between the French, Germans, Spanish, British and their partners from other countries of the Union.

It is also the success of an innovative Europe. A Europe where every nation contributes what it does best. A Europe that is demonstrating its capacity to master and integrate the most advanced technology.

Lastly, it is the success of a European industrial policy, which has helped make Airbus the world's leading aircraft manufacturer.

To our partners with whom we have built this outstanding success, I say that we can and must advance further on the path of European integration, so essential for growth and employment, and quite simply, happiness.



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Let us pursue the success of Airbus in other fields. Let us achieve the same outcome for the energy of the future, for tomorrow's transport and telecommunications, for the medicines of the future. Let us do it together, with a truly European ambition. Let us do it for our younger generation, who look enthusiastically towards the new frontiers of scientific progress, European integration and sustainable development.

The Europe of major industrial and scientific projects is a reality. I have in mind the A350, our joint space programme, the Galileo satellite navigation system, and key facilities such as the European Molecular Biology Laboratory in Heidelberg, CERN and the ITER reactor. We need many other projects of similar scale and ambition.

It is to rise to this challenge that France recently decided to establish an agency for innovation in industry. To my mind, this is the first step in what should be a major European undertaking, underpinned by the strength of our companies and our laboratories, to put European industry at the cutting edge of innovation and at the heart of tomorrow's markets.

This is the Europe and the vision for the future that the A380 embodies and symbolises. When it takes to the air, it will carry the colours of our continent and our technological ambition to new heights. It is my wish that this will be the first in a long series of successes for our countries and for Europe.

Thank you.

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