



# PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

SPEECH BY

MR. JACQUES CHIRAC  
PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

ON THE OCCASION OF  
THE OFFICIAL DINNER GIVEN IN HONOUR OF  
HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS  
PRINCE ABDULLAH BIN ABDUL AZIZ AL SAUD,  
CROWN PRINCE  
OF THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

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ELYSEE PALACE

Wednesday 13 april 2005

Royal Highness,  
Ministers,  
Ambassadors,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and a special honour to welcome your Royal Highness on this official visit, a visit testifying, if that were needed, to the exceptional quality of relations between Saudi Arabia and France. Our last meeting took place in June 2003, on the occasion of the Evian Summit. I greatly appreciated then your willingness to act as spokesman for your country and your region in that international forum. This new visit to Paris was eagerly awaited and desired. You are at home, here, and we are all honoured by your friendship.

Beyond its personal dimension, of which I am deeply appreciative, your presence bears eloquent witness to the close and longstanding ties between our two countries. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is no longer just a great friend with whom our dialogue is consistently warm and confident; it is also a major player in the international community, ever concerned to preserve the balance, stability and peace of the Middle East, a region of strategic importance. Thanks to responsible conduct in the energy market, Saudi Arabia is also playing a restraining role which is helping to sustain the growth necessary to the welfare of the world. France will stand by you in meeting all the challenges of our times.

It is now nearly nine years since we formed a privileged partnership with His Majesty King Fahd, the Guardian of the two Holy Places, and to whom I would ask you to convey the expression of my loyal friendship and deep esteem. We hope to see that partnership wax strong and expand over the years. That event took



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place in the age-old city of Jeddah, which I visited with a sense of emotion. We all recall the role which you, thanks to your wisdom and experience, played in that momentous choice. And, with the passing of time, we all realise how justified it was. Since then, the bonds between France and Saudi Arabia have grown much stronger, and the presence of Your Royal Highness here in Paris this evening offers our two countries a unique opportunity to emphasise clearly the importance we intend to give to the development of relations between them and to their strategic dialogue at the highest level.

In a region whose stability is precarious even now, despite signs of progress, regular consultation between France and the Kingdom is vital. A broad convergence of views has once again emerged in the course of our talks. And this confirms us in the conviction that we must act together, with the international community, the European Union and the countries of the region, in order to turn these hopes into reality.

Iraq is a case in point. The elections of 30 January 2005 marked an important step in the political process laid down in Resolution 1546. To guarantee the integrity of that country and stability in the region, all sections of society and all political forces that renounce violence must be brought into the construction of a democratic country, one in which the Iraqi people can once more play its part to the full in its own destiny.

In Lebanon, where a vile attack has taken the life of former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri—a very close friend of both Saudi Arabia and France—we stand beside the Lebanese people in their desire to restore democracy and recover their country's independence, freedom and sovereignty. That implies the holding of fully democratic elections within the prescribed deadlines, and hence the formation of a new government. That is the will of the Lebanese people and the international community, as made manifest in Security Council resolution 1559. In addition, an international commission of inquiry, as decided by the United Nations, must elucidate the full circumstances of the Mr. Hariri's assassination and establish who was responsible, so that its perpetrators and instigators can be punished.

In Israel and Palestine, the Gaza withdrawal serves as the occasion for a revival of the Road Map for bringing about a Palestinian State living in peace and security side by side with Israel. In that respect, your initiative, adopted by the Summit of the Arab League in Beirut in 2002 and reiterated at the recent summit in Algiers, remains an essential framework for a solution to the conflict.

Finally, Iran has entered into negotiations with France, Germany and Great Britain concerning the peaceful utilisation of its nuclear programme as well as on long-term political and economic arrangements with the European countries. An agreement would impart a new dimension to Iran's relations with the countries of the region and the members of the international community, thereby strengthening the stability of the Middle East, the Gulf especially.



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Your Royal Highness,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

France sets great store by its privileged relationship with Saudi Arabia. And especially so when difficult circumstances arise.

The Kingdom has been troubled by terrorist violence in recent years, sowing death and destruction in several of the country's cities. Under the leadership of Your Royal Highness, Saudi Arabia has confronted the menace, achieving signal successes in its efforts to combat this danger from which no one is safe today. It has also helped to mobilise the international community against the threat by holding a conference on terrorism, in which we played an active part. Together, within the framework of the United Nations and the treaties binding us, we are determined to do everything in our power to defeat this evil which can never be justified. Terrorism has exacted a heavy toll on France itself, which will stand foursquare with the Saudis, as it always has done whenever the region has gone through unsettled times. We are confident in the future of Saudi Arabia and are ready to respond to its needs at all times.

We would also like to develop a dialogue with Saudi Arabia on all of the global issues where the international community is waiting to hear the voice of your country—issues such as poverty reduction in order to bring greater justice to the world, and the future of our planet confronted with the threat of climate change. The European Union hopes to pursue further discussions and action on these issues with its partners in the Gulf.

Under your guidance, the Kingdom has undertaken an ambitious programme of transformation, to which I wish to pay a special tribute. The various National Dialogue sessions, the recent changes in the Consultative Council and the holding of partial municipal elections are all initiatives that deserve to be welcomed. For in whatever country, these reforms must flow from the will of each people and must respect its particular identity if they are to be lasting.

In the economic and social sphere also, the Kingdom has embarked on a policy of adapting Saudi institutions to their environment. Your ambition, Your Highness, is that these initiatives will offer your fellow countrymen, and the young generation especially, all that they can legitimately wish for: education, training, employment, and prosperity. In that regard, the institutions of France, and its companies large, medium and small, stand ready to assist in this drive for modernisation, with their capabilities, their know-how and their imagination.

Your Royal Highness, there is a powerful desire among our two nations to draw closer together even while respecting their cultures. That is the spirit of the dialogue of civilizations to which both our countries are so strongly attached. Ours is a promising partnership, being based on the desire of our two peoples for peace and stability, and for the development of our economies and societies. It is therefore with great joy and hope for the future that we welcome you here today.



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Please allow me, Your Royal Highness, to greet you and your accompanying delegation by expressing my wishes for your personal happiness and success, for His Majesty King Fahd Ibn Abdelaziz and for all the senior officials of the Kingdom, for the happiness of the Saudi people, and for the strengthening of the deep friendship that unites our two countries.

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