



SPEECH BY MR JACQUES CHIRAC PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC
TO THE ROUND TABLE ON THE FUTURE OF MULTILATERALISM

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Chairman, Heads of State and Government, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Multilateralism is an imperative of our time. At the end of the war, our countries became aware that the acceleration of trade was creating a new world where action at international level was to be founded on law and cooperation. This led to the creation of the United Nations System, of which the nations of Europe and Latin America were founding members.

Sixty years of world growth, progress in information and communication technologies, the end of the colonial period and the disappearance of blocs have stepped up this development. Modern life consists in ever more intense human and financial exchanges and in booming trade. This brings about growing interdependence, as well as scourges, that can be controlled only by means of general measures.

This means that security problems, that raise the issue of the use of force, are now global ones which must be addressed in a multilateral framework in order to be dealt with legitimately. In order to realize this, one need only observe the threat that failed states carry for the world's equilibrium or the deadlocks entailed by unilateral action.

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States cannot be satisfied with ad hoc alliances or coalitions. They must organize the planetary city along the lines of a new political society.

This presupposes affirming and implementing fundamental rules and essential forms of solidarity globally. This is the role of the United Nations and of universal membership organizations which stand for the world's unity.

Yet our countries would not stand being gauged uniformly without their identities being taken into account. The global scale is not always the most relevant one. This is why France sets great store by regional integration to which Latin America and Europe are now committed. Day-to-day solidarity is expressed in the framework of large entities that all constitute emerging poles. Regional integration is a bulwark against the upheavals of the world. The European Union bears witness to this with, for instance, the successful experience of the euro.



PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

To avoid the demise of tomorrow's multipolar world through conflicts, we must, however, create more forums for dialogue. The dialogue we are conducting is emblematic in that respect. I am also thinking of the organizations that transcend geographical boundaries and are a crucible for dialogue among cultures, such as the International Organisation of the Francophonie, the Iberian American Solidarity Movement and the Commonwealth.

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One needs to focus on four policy areas to ensure the development of multilateralism:

- First, on consolidating the fundamental standards of humanity and the principles crucial to the international life of our time. This calls for the universal ratification of the major texts for the protection of human rights such as the 1966 Covenants or the treaty establishing the International Criminal Court, which owes so much to cooperation between Latin America and Europe.

This calls for the negotiation of new instruments, such as a Convention on cultural diversity, or on bioethics, and of texts that will prove more effective against threats like the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. For, in all those areas, agreed rules that have been given force of law are solely legitimate and the best safeguard against the permanent temptation of unilateralism.

- The second policy area consists in better implementing the major conventions. Clearly, the Commission on Human Rights does not fully execute its mandate; the mechanisms for combating terrorism or proliferation, and for environmental protection, must be reinforced. We need to set up more effective monitoring and evaluation systems; to improve support programmes for the developing countries; and, if necessary, to establish coercion and sanctions regimes.

- The third policy area focuses on the democratization of the multilateral system, as a condition for ensuring its legitimacy. Regarding the Security Council, enlargement of the two categories of members is required. Concerning economic and social affairs, we need an intergovernmental body capable of giving political impetus to the entire multilateral system and of enhancing its coherence.

We also must complete this system, in particular by creating a United Nations Environment Organization to address the global environmental crisis.

Finally, acting on the lessons learnt from the Genoa, Cancun and Porto Alegre summits, we should further open up the international decision-making bodies to the countries of the South and systematize the dialogue with civil society.

- The last policy area is that of international solidarity, which we shall discuss this afternoon.



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Chairman,

The challenges of our time are brought about by the collision between the unifying forces of globalization and the diversity of peoples and of levels of development. Harnessing globalization presupposes controlling these forces, ensuring the polyphony of cultures and making international solidarity a living fact. This is what multilateralism means.

Just as civil peace prevails in our countries thanks to everyone being subject to a single law that is, however, respectful of everyone's freedoms, so we must now build an international rule of law within which our sovereignty will be curtailed by a choice freely agreed to. Owing to history and the values they share, our two continents are in a good position to establish themselves as the driving force behind such action.

Thank you. |