



REMARKS BY PRIME MINISTER DR. MANMOHAN SINGH ON THE OCCASION OF HIS MEETING WITH PRESIDENT JACQUES CHIRAC OF FRANCE,

PARIS, 12 SEPTEMBER 2005

We have a privileged and strategic relationship with France. We hold His Excellency President Jacques Chirac in the highest esteem as a world statesman. It is for me a great honour, great privilege to be in this great country to reaffirm, to renew our joint commitment to strengthen our multi-faceted relationship in every possible way. France is a very important and proud member of the European Union and we have established a strategic partnership with EU and in fulfilment of the commitment under our strategic partnership, France can play a very important role.

For me, therefore, it is a great opportunity to have an exchange of views with His Excellency the President and there are many ideas which are on my mind to strengthen our economic cooperation with France. Our trade, our investment flows, are moving in the right directions. But they are far below their potential. So I am here to convince the French businessmen community that India is going to be a competitive destination for foreign investment and I seek the support of His Excellency the President and the French Government to ensure that our business communities interact with each other more often, more productively, more fruitfully, than was the case in the past.

We both have a joint concern to ensure that the growing inter-dependence of nations is managed in a manner which gives satisfaction to all countries of the world. We recognise globalisation is a reality which has tremendous opportunities and we all have to work a lot to ensure that the global system, political order, the economic order is managed in a just and equitable manner for the benefit of all countries of the world. India and France have been strategic partners in many ways. We have had rewarding defence cooperation, we are going to build on that and therefore there are a lot of important issues to discuss with His Excellency the President.

I thank the government and people of France, for giving me this opportunity to meet the leaders of the French Government. President Chirac, thank you. Mr. President, I know the pressures on your time with numerous other pre-occupations. That you have chosen to receive me at such short notice is a privilege and your generosity which I will never be able to forget.