



Summit of heads of State and government for the tenth anniversary of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership

## **Speech by M. Jacques Chirac, President of the Republic, at the meeting devoted to the Alliance of Civilizations**

Barcelona, 27 November 2005

On the eve of the first Euro-Mediterranean Summit, we meet here today in order to engage in a moment of reflection on the Alliance of Civilizations. I do so willingly because, as I said at UNESCO shortly after the terrorist attacks of 11 September, I see here an urgent priority for our time.

Some feel obliged to prophesy a clash of civilizations in which, they say, we would see a confrontation between cultures and religions. Their discourse is fuelled by every kind of fear. But we must not accept the trap set for us by those who wish to pit people, their beliefs and their traditions against each other. Let us promote a desire for a political and ethical approach: one based on reason and tolerance.

What might be the founding principles of the Alliance you invite us to join, dear JosØ Luis? I can see four.

The first is the equal dignity of all cultures and their capacity for mutual enrichment. In this respect, the Barcelona Process has been an irreplaceable melting pot for dialogue and contact over the last ten years.

The second is the recognition of cultural diversity. The diversity of cultures, of languages, of traditions is threatened by the steamroller effect of globalization. It is one of the reasons for the friction between different identities in the contemporary world. Defence of diversity is now enshrined in international law thanks to the recent signing of the UNESCO Convention. The aim must now be to breathe life into its provisions by acknowledging every country's right to conduct the cultural policies it sees as most in harmony with its own particular genius, and by emphasizing that cultural assets are not goods which can be bought and sold.

The third principle is obviously respect. Respect for the Other, accepting his/her difference, an attitude that does not come naturally to human societies. Self-respect, which must involve both confidence in one's identity and an ability to take a clear-sighted look at the past. Respect for the universal values which transcend historical experience, affirming the inalienable rights of each individual.



## PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

The last of these principles is solidarity. Our societies in Europe are founded upon that imperative. It is the fruit of bitter struggles. In the era of globalization, i.e. in a world where information spreads instantaneously, this imperative is among the indispensable elements of a genuine Alliance, the guarantee of true equality between people of every origin.

In a troubled world feeling its way, the Alliance of Civilizations deserves our support. France will be an active participant, because the Alliance is in accord with humanism and consequently a vehicle for peace and progress. Thank you.

|