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23RD CONFERENCE OF HEADS OF STATE OF AFRICA AND FRANCE.

Bamako, sunday, 4 december 2005

Dear Youth of Africa and of the African Diaspora,
Dear Marie TAMOIFO NKOM,

You spoke to us this morning in the name of the youth of Africa. We have heard you. We welcome the energy, the commitment, and the ambition of the young on whose behalf you are speaking. They have told us about their hopes, their ambitions, all that makes them indignant, and about their rejection of what is allegedly inevitable. About their determination also to take their fate into their own hands, the fate of a youth as viewed in relation to history and to the memories of the struggles of previous generations. A youth that stands ready to make the 21st century the century of African renaissance.

This ideal is shared by us all, Heads of State and Government of Africa and France. Aware of the difficulties to be overcome by Africa, but trusting in its future, we will assume all the responsibilities entrusted to us by our peoples. We know you will assume yours by asserting yourselves as responsible citizens determined to put your lifeblood in the service of the African continent, a continent you are strengthening with all the vigour and dynamism of young people in their twenties.

The world's outlook on what Africa does and represents is changing, together with Africa's outlook on itself. Africa, you say, is eager to learn, but there is also a great deal for the world to learn from Africa. About what gives African cultures their inherent strength, namely deep-rootedness in a land that harks back to the origins of civilisation, the sense of sharing, pragmatism and flexibility born of confrontation with a difficult environment, dialogue with the expanse of the African skies which makes higher abstractions part and parcel of everyday life.

Whether from Africa or the Diaspora, be proud of being Africans.

Today, now that the information society is coming into its own, African creativity is spreading worldwide. This is shown by all the writers, film directors, artists, painters, sculptors, sportspersons, architects, and scientists who stand for African excellence everywhere.

For you yourselves, drawing strength from your roots, are opening up to the world and breathing the wind from the open sea. Information technology is giving you an additional means to embody this aspiration to the universal, to give it tangible, concrete expression. Thanks to them, today, you are citizens of the world, fully informed about the time you live in and determined to put your stamp on it.



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We are committed to developing information technology and making it available to enable you to make your voice heard loud and clear throughout the continent and to assert your presence, your entrepreneurship and your creative capacities. You consider this a priority. For us, it is a duty. You are all the guardians of part of the soul of your continent, of part of its future, which will not be built without you. It is up to each of you to imagine this future and bring it to life.

And it is for us to put in place the conditions for you to succeed in this, before all else, by meeting vital requirements.

By working for peace, the prerequisite of all fulfilment, in order to end for good the intolerable conflicts in which Africa is tearing itself apart and in which its most vulnerable children are always the first victims. This is a priority for the African Union, who has established the Peace and Security Council, and for its partners, France foremost among them and mobilised alongside the UN in peacekeeping operations and training actions, always at the request of the African themselves.

By waging a daily, difficult and often frustrating battle to provide everyone with basic health care and knowledge. Health, as it is unacceptable for the youth of Africa to live under the constant threat of scourges such as AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and waterborne diseases while solutions exist. We are redoubling efforts to implement effective systems for prevention, for developing health networks and providing access to drugs, and for research on neglected diseases. Education, which conditions the capacity to bring about a fairer society. Primary education to enable all children, girls and boys alike, to gain essential knowledge. Secondary education and vocational training to enable everyone to gain employment. Higher education, for Africa - where there are so many brilliant scientists - to play its full role in the knowledge economy.

By giving Africa the basic tools it lacks: we have decided to accelerate the realisation of major regional and pan-African infrastructure projects to enable regional opening up and the improved movement of persons and goods. Roads, ports, airports, railways, sanitation networks, sustainable energy policies and information highways will help accelerate development and generate sustainable jobs in Africa. The resources exist and are commensurate with the immense wealth created by globalisation. International institutions and governments will have to support this comprehensive investment effort. We are not just speaking fine words: our action is concrete and it will be possible to assess its results.

By working to ensure that all young people - young urbans and young rurals alike - find their rightful place in society and receive the right salary for their work, that all in Africa eat their fill, and to enable Africa to develop its agriculture. Africa's agricultural dimension must be reaffirmed, supported and defended in all international forums. This is what we are fighting for at the WTO.



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By being the bearers of the continent's future into the far distance, because our choices affect future generations. We are, all of us, runners in a relay. The planet will be what you will make of it. In Africa, more than elsewhere, the danger is imminent: desertification, soil erosion, deforestation, shortages of fresh water, the accelerating disappearance of unique animal and plant species, life itself is under threat. We call upon you, the young people of Africa, to mobilise your energies to ensure that your continent remains the ecological jewel in the world's crown, to ensure that its natural resources are placed at the service of sustainable development, as a source of employment and new skills. That is a collective adventure on the same scale as your ambitions.

You are correct - the development of Africa depends on Africans in the first place. They are best able to define the ambitions and terms for development. By creating the African Union, by organising around NEPAD, Africa has drawn itself a road map. You, the young people of Africa, you must make this commitment your own. Because it is Africa's role in the world that is at stake. It is your capacity to live in freedom and peace, to take part in the great adventure of our time: the humanisation of globalisation.

As you know, African leaders are proving highly ingenious in seeking to provide the continent's younger generations with the means to achieve true political fulfilment that should be vigorously supported.

To take control of one's own destiny, however, does not mean being left to fend for oneself. The handicaps bequeathed by history, climate and inappropriate rules of trade make it an obligation for the international community to assist Africa. It is a matter of the future of the continent as well as the future of the world. Such is the conviction first and foremost of France, with which many African countries maintain cultural, economic and personal ties. Serving peace and development, France is engaged at their side in a relationship of equality founded on respect and independence. France calls upon the international community to mobilise to find innovative sources of funding that will assure for the continent the stable revenues it continues to lack. In partnership with Africa, France is working to reform, for greater fairness, the rules of international trade; to assign priority to concrete action in favour of those countries that agree to make major sacrifices to give hope of a better life to their young people. According to a timetable followed by France, between 2002 and 2012 the level of its official development assistance will have more than doubled, reaching 0.7% of its GDP. France calls upon the European Union to do the same between now and 2015 and argues in favour of a special relationship between Africa and Europe.

We have mentioned the capital importance of study grants and visas. France will continue to welcome African students to its soil, seeking to ensure that the skills of young graduates can benefit their countries of origin to the full. France will facilitate travelling by all company managers, creative artists and researchers, who all need to be able to participate without restriction in



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international exchanges. France will support the strategy of co-development, a powerful tool for giving leverage to the contribution made to their countries of origin by the Africans of France and of the Diaspora.

Dear Youth of Africa and of the African Diaspora
and Dear Marie Tamoifo Nkom,

It is no accident if today the voice of Africa is embodied in a young woman. It will also be the responsibility of your generation to commit itself to ensuring that the rights of women, African mothers and daughters, both their political rights and their rights to health and security, are fully recognised and protected everywhere on the continent. Freed of the restrictions by which they are so often burdened, they will be able to play an even greater part in the continent's development.

We salute you all, the young women and men who are the bearers of Africa's highest hopes: your message is one of eloquence, justice and lucidity. By responding to our call, you have made a dramatic entry into the public arena to remind us of the universal principles: the demand for democracy, human rights, and the consolidation of the rule of law. Those are the principles that the African Union has decided to make the core of its action. We are aware of the road that remains to be travelled before they can take root everywhere. But increasingly numerous experiments throughout the continent show that they meet an aspiration that is general and that they will continue to spread, quite simply because they express the irrepressible aspiration of human beings to dignity and respect.

Dear Youth of Africa and of the African Diaspora,
Dear Marie TAMOIFO NKOM,

Our generation has seen Africa win its independence. Some among us contributed to that process. Today, faced with the numberless obstacles that block the way forward for young States, it is our ambition to build a new Africa that will fully achieve the Millennium Development Goals. This Africa is on the move and, to quicken its step, we need you. We approve your proposal for an "African and Diaspora Youth Council" that will meet as a prelude to our summits. It will be voice of an Africa that has made its own Mahatma GANDHI's exhortation: "Be the change you want to see in the world".

Amadou TOUMANI TOURÉ
President of the Republic of Mali.

Jacques CHIRAC,
President of the French
Republic.