



Message from M. Jacques CHIRAC, President of the Republic, to the participants of the Third Global Forum, on Sustainable Development.

(Paris, 2 December 2005)

Ladies and gentlemen,

For its third meeting, the Global Forum on Sustainable Development has chosen to discuss mankind's heritage – the public goods bequeathed to everyone – and the most important of them all, the climate balance. This choice has very special resonance for France.

Since the Johannesburg Summit in 2002, France has set in train a genuine conversion to the principles of sustainable development. The Environment Charter, incorporated into the French Constitution on 1 March this year, proclaims this for the first time in a national constitution: the environment is no longer just the heritage of the nation, but the "common heritage of human beings".

This statement of principle has very direct consequences both for individual behaviour and for public policy. Its inclusion in the preamble to the Constitution, alongside the 1789 Declaration on the Rights of Man and, for economic and social rights, the preamble to the 1946 Constitution means that the Charter's environmental imperative applies to everyone. This major innovation in our basic law lays the foundations of a proper set of sustainable development ethics. Ethics where everyone takes responsibility. Ethics where everyone is committed.

The Charter establishes solidarity between our generation and generations to come. Alongside this solidarity in time, there is also solidarity between France and other peoples. Over and above the new individual rights which the Charter confers, it sets out the duties of each legal entity and individual. It also lays down the sustainable development objectives for public action. Lastly, the Charter is as concerned with biological diversity and the progress of human societies as with the fulfilment of every individual. Its application will be subject to scrutiny by all the judicial institutions. This gives it considerable persuasive force and universal scope.

The new sustainable development ethics must be applied first of all in the fight against climate change, the main threat to mankind's future. The entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol at the beginning of this year was a crucial turning point. But it is merely a first modest step. If there is no international agreement, and if self-interest and irresponsibility take hold,



the world will be unable to stop the time bomb that is climate warming and this century will see the resurgence of diseases we thought had been beaten once and for all, an increase in periods of extreme weather conditions, the destruction of entire regions, and inexorable growth in the number of climate refugees. If we fail to act now, while there is still time, the world will be heading for wide-ranging disorder, with a trail of conflict, destruction and suffering, and, through some terrible collective thoughtlessness, perhaps running the risk of irreversibly jeopardizing everything which progress has achieved.

Faced with the global danger of climate change, mankind must realize that it shares a common destiny. The peoples who share our world must find, in a spirit of dialogue and respect for their diversity, the meaning of shared sustainable development. Climate change is the result of a lack of solidarity between peoples and with the generations to come. In combating it we must find what it means to pass on the values of our civilizations, the meaning of heritage: what we inherit, look after and bequeath to others. Many people, including the first peoples, see the earth as mankind's common heritage. We must now reconnect with this ancient wisdom.

This new code of ethics needed in our times must also be reflected through the proper control and harmonization of globalization, so as to ensure that its enormous forces serve human progress. France has decided to introduce a tax on plane tickets in order to fund the fight against major pandemics in developing countries. She is doing so without waiting for international unanimity to show the possibility of new approaches allowing the tremendous globalization process, which creates such wealth, to benefit everyone. It is our responsibility to correct the imbalances. We have a clear roadmap: the UN Millennium Development Goals. We must follow that roadmap. It is our duty and it is in the clear interest of the richest countries.

Lastly, in order to change the way things are done in the international arena, it is necessary to revise the indicators, which all too often measure only wealth and short-term success. Day-to-day management must encompass the future by favouring the long-term perspective. The economic concepts and statistical tools on the basis of which we build our models reflect our scale of values and the real price we attach to things. The instruments we currently use for economic analysis are still incapable of measuring the cost to communities of damage to the environment, just as they are still inadequate for evaluating the social cost of economic developments.

This is why I endorse the Forum's proposal to set up a sustainable development index, to provide an environmental dimension alongside the Human Development Index.

I see your work on sustainable development as part of a movement of ethical responsibility. In order to put together the agreements to follow the Kyoto Protocol's first stage up to 2012, we shall have to overcome fear and self-interest. We shall have to offer a system which is fair at global level. We shall have to develop an environmental diplomacy of the mind and heart.



PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

I wish this Third Global Forum on Sustainable Development every success.

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