



## **Speech by M. Jacques CHIRAC, President of the Republic, at the opening of the 23rd Africa-France Summit of heads of State and Government.**

(Bamako, 3 December 2005)

President Tourø of Mali, Mon Cher ATT, I should like to use this affectionate term, which in no way diminishes my respect for you, but allows me very simply to express to you my esteem and friendship. Both are very great.

Monsieur le Doyen, President of Gabon, whom I am very pleased to congratulate on his brilliant re-election.

Heads of State and government,

And among the heads of State, you will allow me to voice my respect and affection for the President of Liberia. She is paying her first official visit in Africa and we particularly appreciate this.

First Ladies, who have brought us Africa's smile and to whom I want to pay my respects,

and Cher ATT, you will allow me to address greetings to our Dogon brothers who earlier gave us such an outstanding, warm and friendly welcome.

I thank President Tourø and the people of Mali for the exceptional hospitality they have extended to us. These expressions of friendship, of affection, will remain, I'm sure, engraved in all our hearts.

I come to Bamako buoyed by a feeling of hope and confidence. Africa has changed. Driven by the ambition of its leaders, its peoples, its youth, it has opted for responsibility. Already, one can see radical change, a new approach to peace, democracy and development, particularly human development. The road to be travelled remains long and unpredictable: it will require all the energy of Africans and all the energy of the international community. However, I say to you that in our new century Africa will surprise the world with its achievements and successes. France intends to contribute to that renaissance.

What future will Africa offer its young people? That is indeed the only question worth asking, the question that in fact determines all others and to which it is our responsibility, all of us together, to provide an answer.

Today, as everyone knows, almost two thirds of the population of Africa is under 25 years old. This constitutes a major demographic challenge. In a world



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in which traditional forms of solidarity are fading in the face of urbanization, a world marked by the instantaneous circulation of information, nothing would be more dangerous than to leave young Africans by the wayside. If they were to go down the dead-end of violent protest and ideological extremism, Africa would be in great peril and the world in certain danger of imbalance. The future of Africa lies in its young people, and the future of young Africans is first and foremost in Africa. It is up to us to give them the means to be free and for their moral and physical fulfilment.

The primary responsibility of Africa is to put an end to the murderous upheavals which are rocking it. We cannot tolerate, the Africans can't tolerate, a situation in which the law of the jungle, schisms of another era, the tragedy of child soldiers and the suffering of millions of refugees becomes permanent. This is in no way inevitable, it is not in the African nature.

Due to the unprecedented commitment of the African Union and the United Nations, peace and the rule of law are making progress. Democracy is taking root. France is making her full contribution to this effort by supporting, at the Africans' request, the operations conducted by those institutions and by the relevant and capable regional organizations. By adapting her military deployment and supporting RECAMP, along with the European Union, France is helping to defuse crises and train the African peacekeeping corps which are the true solution to the dangers of destabilization. She also supports the goal of an international treaty on the weapons trade.

It is also a matter of urgency to conquer poverty, to allow the emergence of a middle class, make the best use of the talents of the elites, of whom there are so many on this continent. Training must be our priority. Over and above the essential efforts to promote education, we must increase the number of centres for apprenticeship and vocational training. These meet real needs and create skilled jobs, for example in such essential sectors as transport, construction and health, in which Africa suffers from a shortage of specialist workers. It is in this way that Africa will stop trying simply to survive and give its children hope of a better life.

The difficulty of working and building their lives in their own country sadly forces thousands of Africans to emigrate, doing so in disgraceful conditions.

I appeal to everyone's sense of responsibility. Together, Africans and Europeans, we have a duty to dismantle the illegal immigration networks, behind which in fact hides a shameful, odious and Mafia-like trade. Together, we must encourage co-development and enable Africans to enjoy decent living and working conditions in their own countries. France and the European Union, whose representative I welcome here, have undertaken to intensify their efforts in this field.

This also requires a recognition of the key role played by the development players constituted by the Africans of the diaspora. The experience, expertise and investment they bring to Africa must be put to good use.



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With an average growth rate of 5% in recent years, Africa is on the path of development. To strengthen this dynamic, the commitments of the international community to the continent, which were confirmed at the G8 Summit in Gleneagles, must be placed on a lasting basis and, at the same time, Africa must pursue its political, economic and social reforms.

These mutual commitments have led to the total cancellation of the debt of the poorest countries, and particularly to this summer's decisions involving \$55 billion. But it would be intolerable for other countries which are undertaking difficult and courageous reforms to be penalized by wholly excessive debts on the pretext that they have slightly higher incomes. For this reason, we must also examine their situation. On their behalf, President Bongo has taken many initiatives to help them and I personally support them.

These reforms must also be backed by an increase in official development assistance. This is the reason for the effort accepted by the French in raising the level of ODA to 0.7% of our GDP by 2012. In the space of ten years, such aid will have more than doubled. I have personally committed myself to convincing the European Union to take the same step by 2015.

But these budgetary efforts won't be enough to allow us to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The truth is that to achieve these goals ODA would have to be at least doubled I'll come back to this. This would be politically and morally legitimate. And to do this, we can't imagine this ODA coming solely out of national budgets. So we have to find new resources, innovative financing, an international tax to provide the essential resources without which we won't develop the regions which have to be developed and we won't enable the young people there to stay there.

As I was saying, to achieve these goals, we must at least double ODA to \$150 billion a year. That's a major effort, I acknowledge, but it is modest, a very modest one compared with the extra resources generated every year by globalization. It will be a necessary effort for so long as Africa remains under the constant threat of malaria, AIDS, tuberculosis and waterborne diseases. Prevention and education must be improved, research developed, and access to medicines made possible for all. Successful experiments in African countries applying proactive policies must encourage us to go forward and raise more funding, without which we won't address the political and moral requirements I was talking about earlier. And it's in everyone's interest. In Africa's interest gradually to improve its situation and that of its children. But also in the interest of the whole international community, which can't take the responsibility of leaving part of the community by the wayside.

At the forefront of this combat, in 2006 France will institute a solidarity contribution on plane tickets that will bring in over 200 million every year. But, in my view, it isn't this sum of money which justifies it but its value as an example and experiment. I call upon the international community to join the countries which are willing to commit to this initiative. And I invite all interested States to come to Paris in February for a conference devoted to this



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issue in order to make the process of massively increasing development aid irreversible.

We must also raise again the issue of commodities, on which depend the lives of millions of Africans. Price volatility leads to intolerable economic shocks. We must remedy these. We have got the IMF to put in place a facility for countries suffering from this. France will devote \$1 billion to this from the outset.

The Hong Kong conference is just a few days away, and we must also remember that Africa has to take its rightful place in international trade, especially in agricultural products. It must not be ignored by the rich or emerging countries, which is sadly the case today. It must not be the victim of a system which is good in principle, but whose actual application risks being profoundly unjust. African farmers must receive a fair reward for their work. We cannot accept a situation in which hasty and generalized liberalization of agricultural trade ruins the efforts of the least-developed nations. Preference systems must be consolidated and put on a lasting basis. Developed countries must commit to bringing these systems into line with the most favourable ones and these are those of the European Union's "Everything But Arms". I also call upon the United States to remove the subsidies to their cotton producers, as Europe has started doing. These subsidies impoverish millions of small African producers, those whom the Mali President was talking about earlier, producers who are nevertheless perfectly competitive. And lastly, we must review the logic underlying the agreements Europe will be negotiating with the ACP countries: we must certainly open up economic areas, but we must do so at a reasonable pace while all the time maintaining preferential arrangements without strings.

Because France is Africa's tireless champion, she will make every effort to ensure that the next G8 meeting in St Petersburg heralds an exceptional mobilization in favour of the African continent. I have talked to President Putin at length about this particularly in three essential areas: vocational training, infrastructures and capitalizing on subsoil resources.

I should like this partnership also to provide a special opportunity for exchanges between France and the countries of Africa, especially Francophone Africa. Entrepreneurs, managers, researchers, teachers, artists: their activities are by nature dependent on contact. I have decided to facilitate the issuing to them of long-term, multiple-entry visas, since this is essential for their activities.

France will, of course, continue to welcome large numbers of African students on her soil. Over the last five years, their numbers have gone up by 70%. One third of the 106,000 African students are on postgraduate courses, especially in the sciences. That shows you their calibre. We must act to ensure that their skills can benefit their countries of origin to the full. This is one of the points to be discussed this afternoon at President Tourø's suggestion.





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Thus modernized, our partnership, a genuine pact for the future, will enable us to take up new challenges. I shall cite just one because, on President Tandja's initiative, we talked about it yesterday evening: protection of the environment. To halt the spread of the desert and then push it back, reforest, protect water sources, fauna and flora this is imperative for the future of the continent and of our planet. Take the example of what Niger is doing to protect the river. This is simultaneously addressing an ecological emergency and creating work and employment.

France will always keep faith with the ties uniting her to Africa, ties which first and foremost stem from the heart and shared feelings. What brings us together is faith in Africa. It is our fight for an Africa sure of its own identity. A resolutely modern Africa, rid of its ideology and archaism. An Africa with the strength derived from its cultural heritage and proud of its conquests. An Africa bold and go-ahead. The Africa we all want and young Africans want. The Africa which we must never forget is the cradle of humanity and is today embodied by its young people.

Our relationship will never be an ordinary one. Forged in a common history, in a sharing of language and cultures, it is enriched by the stream of interchanges which all the French on African soil and all the Africans on French soil help nourish and deepen. France knows that part of her memory is in Africa, that some of her real-life experiences are African. On your continent depend part of our future and, quite simply, part of the world's future.

Since the declarations of independence, you have changed and so have we. But what has not changed and will not change is France's resolute commitment to help Africa and stand at its side. The young will judge us by our actions. We must be capable of responding to their call. Thank you.

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