



Speech by Mr Jacques CHIRAC, President of the Republic, at "Smart Village" technological park.

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Cairo (Egypt) - Thursday, april 20th 2006

Prime Minister,
Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished business leaders,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Prime Minister, I was very moved by the warm words that you extended to France.

You have welcomed me here today at a most prestigious site, a high-tech business complex with cutting-edge facilities that include the top names in high technology. You personally, Prime Minister, were its architect. It is a powerful demonstration of Egypt's well-placed ambitions.

Faced with significant challenges, your country has decided to contend with them by striving for excellence. It has opted for a knowledge economy. I am delighted that French businesses are called upon to play their role therein.

Egypt's challenges are the challenges of today's world: providing food, education and employment for a population that is growing by one and a half million people every year. Modernising infrastructures, improving the healthcare system, guaranteeing water resources and environmental protection, ensuring access for one and all to education. All are issues that your country has tackled with courage and determination.

France admires and supports this great ambition. This is not only because of our friendship; it is also in the interests of all. Progress and stability for Egypt means progress and stability for the Middle East and Mediterranean as well.

By coming to Cairo today with a delegation of business leaders, I hope to show what trust France has in Egypt's ability to deliver on the development challenge.

Our economic relations are steadily rising to the same high level as our political relations. Over and above the growth in our trade, France is among the top foreign investors in your country. Nearly one hundred enterprises have a presence here, employing 36,000 people and representing several billion euros' worth of holdings.



PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

I invite French firms to place their bets with Egypt because it's a winning bet. Already some major projects of potential interest to French companies are appearing. Foremost among these is Cairo's metro Line 3, where the expertise of French firms will no doubt prove an asset. Egypt is also looking to acquire high-performance satellite observation resources, and several French companies are working on just such material, perfectly suited to its needs.

To create a new strategic partnership between firms in our two countries, however, it was vital to have recourse to an authority enabling reflection and proposals. I am thus particularly pleased to proceed today, along with Prime Minister Ahmed NAZIF, with the official inauguration of the Franco-Egyptian Presidential Business Board. Supported by the business community of both countries, this Board is to be an instrument for dialogue and exchange at the very highest level.

Its members are all around me. They are all entrepreneurs, deeply involved in Franco-Egyptian relations. I am counting on them to draft proposals, as soon as possible, that will make our joint desire to build this new partnership into a reality. I wish to express to them my appreciation and gratitude and now I hand over to you.

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