



## **Speech by Mr Jacques CHIRAC, President of the French Republic, on the occasion of the Award to His Excellency Mr Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal, of the Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize.**

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UNESCO, Tuesday 16 may 2006.

Dear Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal,  
Mr Director-General of UNESCO,  
Presidents and friends,

It is a pleasure and honour for me to add my voice to those who cherish Senegal and love peace in their joy at President Wade being awarded the Houphouët-Boigny Prize.

Dear President Abdoulaye, the Prize bears the name of a man to whom Africa and the world owe a great deal, that of Félix Houphouët-Boigny.

This outstandingly high-minded African viewed political action as a means of furthering concord and understanding among human beings. He was the initiator of a true culture of peace. With his celebrated dictum, "Peace is not a word, but an attitude", he was at one with the ideals of UNESCO, and that is why he wanted it to be home to this Prize. In a world where so much conflict and tragedy spring from the spirit of domination and confrontation, he had the wisdom to seek mutual understanding and fellowship by listening and discussing. It would be good if these same principles, rooted in African tradition, could inspire the political protagonists in Côte d'Ivoire so that their peoples might recover the brotherhood and prosperity present in their memories.

The Houphouët-Boigny Prize is a distinction bestowed on those who serve the cause of peace. Among them, we cannot fail to mention two of your distinguished predecessors, Frederik de Klerk and Nelson Mandela.

Dear Abdoulaye, the Prize once again today is awarded to an African. Very aptly, it honours a philosophy and a conduct turned to the service of peace and democracy, and it crowns a political career devoted to leading people to fellow-mindedness.

You are known to be ready at all times to shoulder personally the tasks of mediation and arbitration and devise imaginative proposals for resolving long



## PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

drawn-out disputes.

All of us here recognise your determined commitment to human rights and democracy in Senegal. Your election, marked by an exemplary transfer of office, underscored that democracy's maturity. Allow me more especially to hail, since the subject is one of my abiding concerns, your courageous decision to abolish the death penalty in Senegal.

Your efforts on behalf of human rights, peace in Africa, African unity and fairer economic development all stem from the same vision. In contributing to the birth of NEPAD and launching initiatives to bridge the digital and agricultural divides, you are encouraging young Africans to assume Africa's destiny and restore the Continent's pride and influence.

In the name of my country, and on behalf of all those who care about Africa's peace and security, I wish to express to you, Mr President, my high regard and my gratitude. This same high regard is felt by the French for the Senegalese people, and the many brilliant personalities it has produced. In this "Senghor Year" which celebrates the hundredth anniversary of Senghor's birth, it is fitting to end with a few words from one of his last speeches. "Let us work together in building a new world. Africans, I call upon you to change while remaining true to what is best in you, your faith in life. Friends in Europe and America, offer us the foundations for a humanistic partnership in which short-term interests are set aside in favour of a genuine symbiosis of hearts and minds."

May we all, through ceremonies such as the one which brings us together today, seek to attain the symbiosis urged upon us by the universal, immortal poet-President.

Thank you.

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