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Preliminary statement by M. Jacques CHIRAC, President of the Republic, before his meeting with Mr Ehud OLMERT, Prime Minister of Israel

Paris, 14 June 2006

Ladies and gentlemen, I welcome all the Israeli, French and foreign journalists. I am happy to extend a friendly greeting to the Prime Minister, Mr Olmert, on his first official visit to France. We're going to have talks, which I'm delighted about; these will essentially be marked by desire for a close dialogue on all the issues, be they bilateral, international or regional.

What the Israelis want clearly emerged from the last elections in Israel: peace and security. It's understandable, because this Israeli-Palestinian conflict really has gone on too long. Today it's essential to establish peace in that region, a peace which presupposes two States living side by side in security.

This objective wholly desirable in every respect, particularly at a moment when there's a drift towards the resumption of violence presupposes a resumption of the negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. France and the European Union are wholly determined to make their contribution, doing the very utmost, to building this peace, a lasting peace enabling both parties to live together, peacefully.

It's in this spirit that I'm going to have the privilege of talking to the Prime Minister, to whom I extend, once again, the warmest of welcomes.

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