



28th Franco-British Summit Statement made by M. Jacques CHIRAC, President of the Republic, during his joint press conference with Mr Tony BLAIR, Prime minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Paris, 9 June 2006

THE PRESIDENT Ladies and gentlemen, I'm happy to extend a warm welcome to the British, French and other foreign press representatives and very happy to be doing so on the occasion of the visit of the [British] Prime Minister, his ministers and their teams, for this 28th Franco-British Summit. I wish them, in the true sense of the term, the most cordial of welcomes.

When you look at history, you see that Britain and France have often, or at times, had reasons for being at odds with each other, they have quarrelled and at times fought each other. But today we are really and truly, I'm extremely glad to say, increasingly in a period of solidarity, agreement and understanding. And I believe I can say that the Prime Minister welcomes this and, at any rate, I am particularly pleased about it. So I welcome him with all my heart for this 28th summit and I'm going to tell you briefly which subjects we discussed during our meeting, and then during the one which included members of our governments.

The first point we talked about was energy and climate change. We're very worried about the way today's world is changing in that it's upsetting a number of balances and risks leading to changes in the climate which are fraught with consequences for the future of the planet and its inhabitants, due to what is perhaps an unreasonable use of energy resources.

We have together made one of our primary concerns [the development of] a European energy policy allowing us to have greater security [of supply], and competitiveness, and also to be more prudent in the use of these resources, given the consequences this entails, and especially the limited nature of fossil fuel energy. This programme is backed by political will and was translated into action by decisions taken at the last European Council, which are important for now and also for the future.

Similarly, we decided today to create a Franco-British nuclear energy forum. Everyone understands that nuclear energy is one way of addressing the energy problem of tomorrow's world and I mean one way of addressing it but it's one which requires coordination at the technical level, as regards production,



security, decommissioning, in short, in the management of the whole nuclear energy issue. It's legitimate for two countries like Britain and France to be keen to work together, reflect together and indeed take common decisions here.

Second area we talked about: defence policy. It has to be realized that defence is of absolutely vital importance to us. Britain and France together account for 50% of the European defence effort, 50% of the effort of the 25 and two thirds of the European military research effort. This means that our role, our responsibilities, our ambitions in the noble sense of the term are absolutely crucial.

We have been aware of this for some time. We had already launched, with all the necessary prudence and determination, at our Saint-Malo meeting, this common defence policy which has gradually developed, including through the creation of the European Defence Agency, and together we have participated in a lot of operations: in the Balkans, with the operations to maintain law and order, the peacekeeping operations, and in Africa. We've worked together too on essential equipment such as, for example, the joint construction, now virtually decided on, of a Franco-British aircraft carrier. This aircraft carrier has got off to a good start, i.e. there's every reason to think that early next year a definitive decision can be taken on building this aircraft carrier.

Going beyond defence, we talked about the preparation of the forthcoming European Council in Brussels, and here we have a wholly shared approach to things. We referred to the decisions which together, we took at Hampton Court, at the European Council under British presidency, during which we decided to focus on action of concern to all Europeans: on security, employment, development and economic activity. We have, in this sphere, confirmed our common action in respect of the launch of these measures in the areas of research, immigration, education, defence which I've already referred to and energy, I spoke about this a moment ago. So we're totally determined to pursue project-based Europe, i.e. the people's Europe, the building of project-based and people's Europe.

Also, given the stances taken by a number of countries those which have approved the Constitutional Treaty, those which have disapproved of it by voting "no", i.e. France and the Netherlands, and the five or six which have halted the procedures for approving this Constitutional Treaty, so as to respect everyone's positions, we think that an extended period of reflection going beyond the forthcoming European Council is necessary and that it's right to go along with the idea of prolonging the period of reflection.

Nevertheless, that doesn't mean us doing nothing. We agree with the quest a proposal France made recently which the European Commission has approved for the way to improve the functioning of the institutions within the framework of the existing treaties. I.e., without amending the treaties in any way, but by making some technical improvements in a number of areas of their operation: particularly as regards the responsibility of [national] parliaments in respect of the subsidiarity principle, and, in some areas, facilitating the taking of



majority decisions when this is possible and hasn't been provided for.

We also talked about the problem of the [EU's] absorptive capacity in the event of a further enlargement, and here too we agree.

Obviously, any additional enlargement, going beyond what is currently scheduled and decided on, presupposes reflection at European Union level since there would [firstly] be political consequences: the ability of our general publics to accept successive and subsequent enlargements, even though it's necessary to envisage these enlargements for reasons to do with peace, democracy and development.

And, secondly, financial consequences, particularly regarding our ability and resources to finance the common policies, for example the agriculture, social cohesion and other policies.

Thirdly, consequences for the very operation of our institutions which, it has to be recognized, are already a bit overloaded because of the number of players actively involved in our decision-making.

So there needs to be reflection. The British Prime Minister impressed on me that this required starting from the principle that the enlargement criteria, particularly those we decided on in Copenhagen, aren't modified in any way. I told him that we were totally agreed on this point, that the criteria hadn't to be rediscussed, modified and a fortiori even discussed. There are no grounds for that, there's no purpose in discussing the criteria.

We then talked about the common initiatives we have taken in the sphere of peace, and especially on development and particularly the quest for innovative funding, with the British initiative on vaccination, an important programme which France is participating in. Secondly the programmes to tax plane tickets, which Britain has also subscribed to, in order to release funds to combat tuberculosis, malaria and AIDS in the poor countries, particularly in the case of the young.

Here too, we are totally agreed on a major step forward. What's important is doing something positive there's what's been called UNITAID, which is being supported by FIFA during the World Cup to set an example, to trial innovative financing, since we obviously won't resolve any of the development problems with the current level of development aid. We won't do it. We can say we will, but we won't do it. So innovative financing has to be found to increase development assistance and triple the aid, which is necessary if we want to fulfil our responsibilities vis-à-vis development.

Finally, we talked about the major international problems, which we see totally eye to eye on.

Iran of course: we are working together in a process we, with Germany the three Europeans launched together, which has recently been broadened to



include the Americans, Russians and Chinese and which I hope will allow us to find a way, an honourable and effective solution for everyone, of ending the crisis, resolving the Iranian problem as we see it developing today.

We also shared the same feeling on the situation in Lebanon. Hopes for the dialogue, possibly concern, given Syria's attitude which isn't what one could hope for and she must, imperatively, comply with UNSCR 1680 and accept the international community's demands regarding Lebanon's security and independence.

On the Israeli-Palestinian process and the need to get Hamas to comply with the three conditions which, as you know, the international community has set out: essentially recognition of Israel and respect for the treaties between the PLO and Israel, but also the need for the European Union and international community to provide the necessary aid for the Palestinian people who, without it, will face an absolutely tragic crisis at the human level and an extremely dangerous crisis at the political level including aid to enable payment of civil servants' salaries.

Finally, we talked about the reform of the United Nations. In short, on all these points, we have absolutely identical approaches and conclusions.

That's what's been done today and I welcome the excellent spirit in which we have discussed these problems without finding any particular reason for disagreement.

Q. In five weeks, there will be a referendum in the Palestinian Territories. The civil servants haven't been paid for over two months, but they are nevertheless going to have to organize this referendum. Is Europe prepared to find a solution to help with the organization of this referendum, which is crucial for the peace process?

THE PRESIDENT The Quartet has given the European Union instructions to the effect that aid was to be given to the Palestinians in every area, including the payment of the civil servants. This isn't just in the context of the preparation of a referendum, but, as you said, concerns nearly a million people who, with their families generally have no other income than the father or mother's salary. They haven't been paid for over two months, so there's a moral obligation, and here there are potentially extremely serious political consequences. This is why I indeed think that the solution will be found very fast and we're emphasizing the urgency more than the principle.

Q. What can the Western world today do in the face of the Iranian regime's intransigence and bad faith?

THE PRESIDENT First of all, let's not use extreme language here. There's a fundamental problem: can the world accept, today, any country whatsoever deliberately launching a process designed to lead to the production of a nuclear weapon? Quite obviously, the vast majority of the world answers "no" to



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this question, and does so wisely.

There's already been enough proliferation. Proliferation must above all be stopped, this is probably vital for the balance of tomorrow's world.

Proliferation must be stopped, but Iran isn't being particularly targeted. So we have an Iranian problem. Of course, we wish to resolve this problem with due regard for Iran, this goes without saying, for her obvious rights particularly with respect to nuclear power, civilian nuclear power.

We don't at all dispute Iran's right to produce civilian nuclear energy. On the other hand, on the non-proliferation front and, moreover, in the light of the treaties existing in this sphere, we can't agree to her launching and pursuing a process which, especially through enrichment, could in fact lead to her developing a nuclear weapon. That's what this is about and what's under discussion between, on one hand, Europe, which was the leader here, and now the United States, China and Russia and I welcome this broadening of the international community and, on the other, Iran.

The discussions are under way. They are being conducted, in my view excellently, by the European Union's foreign policy representative, Mr Javier Solana. I saw him again yesterday and he reported to me on his latest discussions. Others are going to follow. I shall be very careful not to prejudge their result, which I hope of course will be positive. Thank you. |