



Welcoming speech by Jacques CHIRAC President of the French Republic during the Second France-Oceania Summit

Paris - Monday 26 June 2006

Heads of State and Government,
European Commissioner, cher Louis Michel
Heads of Delegation,
Ladies and gentlemen,
My dear friends,

I would first like to welcome you all most warmly and cordially to France. France, who is always aware that it also belongs in Oceania, where it feels it has very strong ties that are both those of a long-standing history and those of the heart.

Three years after our meeting in Papeete, your presence is a sign of our friendship and of your commitment to the dialogue we have achieved. Political stability, economic development and environmental liability: those are the challenges that unite us and will be central to our discussions.

Before the start of our proceedings, permit me to tell you how happy and proud I am to hold this second Summit at the very time when the Quai Branly Museum is opening to the public. The Museum is in my view the symbol of a France that knows and acknowledges the cultures of the whole world. Of a France that affirms the equal dignity of peoples. Of a France that tirelessly advocates dialogue among cultures and among civilizations.

In Papeete, I told you that I wished to make of this museum our common house, a place for promoting exceptional scientific and cultural cooperation, a European showcase for the immense wealth of Oceanian cultures and the beauty of their traditions.

France has kept this promise, thanks to the commitment of so many of you. Thanks to all who were involved, the Arts of Oceania will have a cultural impact from the heart of Paris. May this museum bring about a universal awakening by giving the arts of the Pacific their rightful place. At a time when cultural diversity and the affirmation of identities are the order of the day, we must go yet further. I propose that we examine together, with UNESCO, the European Union and, in particular, the European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, an initiative to protect and develop the unique heritage of Oceanian peoples, including their architectural heritage.

Ladies and gentlemen,



PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

France wishes to promote the values of dialogue and cooperation in its relations with the Pacific States and their regional organizations, whose leaders I salute here.

The Statutes of the Pacific Islands Forum are to be signed by several Forum member countries on the occasion of this Summit. This is an opportunity for me to reaffirm French support for the expanding regional integration process.

Within the Forum, your countries are committed to resolutely promoting democracy, human development, economic growth and sustainable development. Together, they are courageously meeting the security-related challenges affecting regional stability, as was the case yesterday in the Solomon Islands, and in a different context in East Timor.

This is why we wish to develop a special political dialogue between the Forum and France. This is why I also want to express our wish to see New Caledonia and French Polynesia achieve associate membership status and the Wallis and Futuna Islands observer status.

More broadly, we would like New Caledonia and French Polynesia to be able to participate ever more actively in the economic and social life of their Region. The new cooperation agreement between New Caledonia and Vanuatu, the launching soon of a New Caledonian season in New Zealand, and the development of contacts between French Polynesia and the Cook Islands or Kiribati show that this is definitely a shared vision.

A member of the Oceanian family owing to its territorial units in the Pacific, France is also at the heart of the European Union and hence keeps inviting its European Union partners to involve themselves in the Pacific region. I am therefore especially happy that European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid Louis Michel, a man for whom we all have much esteem and respect, has done us the kindness of being with us here today. He will confirm Europe's commitment to support you in the framework of a strengthened partnership.

Europe cannot be indifferent to the future of a region that covers a third of the world's surface and where invaluable ecological treasures are found. It wants to help you build an ecologically preserved Pacific, a harmonious and stable Pacific, a prosperous Pacific with its rightful place in the new global economy, a Pacific that should meet the legitimate ambitions of its children.

Europe knows that you are all concerned about global warming which affects the very existence of a number of your States. With the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol, Europe now stands at the forefront of this crucial fight for the future of coral reefs and for that of humankind as a whole. In a few days' time, during the G8 Summit in Saint-Petersburg, I shall again stress the urgency of global mobilization for ecology and for the world's equilibrium, commensurate with the stakes involved.

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PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

Ladies and gentlemen, France shares your concerns and your ambitions. It champions your region in all international forums and will continue to do so in the future.

Thanking you once again for your willingness to travel a long way, I now suggest we commence our work and hand over to Sir Michael Somare, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea.

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