



NATO SUMMIT PRESS CONFERENCE GIVEN BY M. JACQUES CHIRAC, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC (EXCERPTS)

(Istanbul, 28 June 2004)

THE PRESIDENT (...) Two years ago in Prague (...) the Atlantic Alliance opened a new chapter in its history, marked by the enlargement, the establishment of more flexible and more effective military tools and, lastly, by the strengthening of its partnerships. And this is the task we have pursued today.

This summit first of all sets the seal on the new enlargement and, this morning, I was happy to be the spokesman of the heads of State and government, welcoming the seven new members who have joined NATO.

We also drew up a first progress report on NATO's military tools. As you know, France is fully involved in this military effort of the NRF, the NATO Response Force, whose national assets, I remind you, are also available to the European Union. France is too, I had the opportunity to reiterate, particularly for the new members, for those who don't know us as well, one of the leading contributors of forces to NATO military missions.

In the second quarter of this year, France will be heading the NATO-led operations in Kosovo. She will also be in Afghanistan through the Eurocorps staff whose commitment, I note in passing, is one of the symbols of Defence Europe. This deployment is a model example of how a strong Defence Europe is not only compatible but also necessary for a strong NATO military organization.

We also talked about Bosnia and the taking-over from SFOR, at the end of the year, in the framework of the arrangements known as "Berlin plus", by a European Union force. As regards Kosovo, which is causing us concern, as you know, I pointed out that the violence of the recent clashes had to spur us not to lower our guard but to maintain a robust military presence.

In Afghanistan, it is our duty to support the political process and the action carried out by President Karzai. At lunch the NATO Secretary-General asked whether it was right, in the run-up to the forthcoming elections which we are naturally anxious to see held calmly and democratically whether or not it was appropriate to mobilize and deploy in Afghanistan units of the new NATO Response Force, the NRF. Some of our colleagues were in favour of this idea. I pointed out that, firstly, it wasn't the role of the NRF whose remit is to act in the event of an established crisis, which is obviously not the case in Afghanistan today. Moreover, on the eve of political elections, too emphatic, too large a presence of NATO was perhaps politically not the wisest and most sensible course of action. So I proposed that, if we had concerns after hearing President Karzai tomorrow, the wisest move was to put the NRF on alert, in case



## PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

it should be needed, and, secondly, to send a fact-finding mission over there to assess the situation on the spot.

We then talked about the capital importance of our partnerships: partnership with Russia first of all, of course, which is developing well; partnership too with Ukraine, we shall have the chance to talk about this again tomorrow; partnership with the countries of Central Asia, the Caucasus, and also the countries of the Mediterranean, these are all still among our priorities.

With the other countries of the Middle East, we can also encourage exchanges, dialogue. But France has laid great emphasis and moreover others have agreed with her on the fact that it's up to these countries to make their requests and not for us to impose things on them. I also reiterated that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was at the heart of the problems and difficulties we are experiencing throughout the region and that there would not be a peaceful, stable solution in that part of the world, without a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian problem. (...)

Over lunch, we talked about international issues, essentially Afghanistan, and Iraq with the adoption of UNSCR 1546 which is now effective, since the handover of sovereignty has now taken place. During lunch, a little before it actually happened, we learned from the United States President of the dissolution of the Coalition Provisional Authority. We naturally welcomed this. It has taken place two days before the date initially scheduled, and the Iraqi interim government will thus take office, forty-eight hours earlier, assuming Iraq's sovereignty in line with UNSCR 1546. As you know, I think the restoration of Iraq's sovereignty is a necessary condition - alas an insufficient, but necessary one for the restoration of peace, stability, democracy, progress and development in that country. France has again wished the Iraqi interim government success and assured it of her support in Iraq's economic and political reconstruction. She hopes that the Iraqi people can, immediately, retake control of their country's destiny and really believe that they are doing so.

As regards NATO's role in Iraq, you know my position: I don't believe it is NATO's job to intervene in Iraq and, above all, I am convinced that if NATO were to do so, the negative consequences would definitely outweigh, particularly at the psychological and political levels, the positive ones. It isn't appropriate, it wouldn't be understood. I am convinced that the only solution, I repeat, is really to make the Iraqi people believe they have regained control of their destiny.

And one of the necessary conditions for the rapid restoration of Iraqi sovereignty is obviously for the Iraqi authorities to be able to have military and police forces without which there's no sovereignty in a modern State. So the Iraqi authorities must be able to have and command a military force and a police force. This is one of the points France had pressed when UNSCR 1546 was being drawn up in New York. The statement we have adopted and you have seen reflects the NATO member States' consensus on the principle of a positive response to the Iraqi requests vis-à-vis training.



In this respect, I would remind you that some while ago France signalled her agreement to help train the Iraqi police, outside Iraq. We also discussed how this help ought to be given and concluded that the only way of tailoring it to the present situation was for the nations with the requisite capabilities to carry out the training in the framework of an agreement with the Iraqi government. Either the Coalition nations, on the spot or elsewhere, or the nations outside the Coalition, on the spot or elsewhere. As regards France, I pointed out that France, would, if necessary, help with the training, but of course outside Iraq.

(...)

Q. You have just confirmed to us that you wanted the nations with the requisite capabilities to carry out the training either outside or inside Iraq. From my reading of the communiqué (..) it looks as if NATO as such is offering the training?

THE PRESIDENT I don't think that's how it reads, but nevertheless you are right on one point: NATO doesn't have any capabilities, it's the nations which have the requisite capabilities (...). On the other hand, NATO has some specific assets, such as, for example, the Defence College in Rome, which is an excellent officer training institution. We are obviously in favour of that college, a NATO institution and thus in a way NATO, being able to train Iraqi officers in Rome. (...)

Q. I'd like to come back to the issue of training. The NATO Council in Brussels is to clarify, decide on the details, if I've understood it right. Does that mean that if the NATO Council decided on NATO going into Iraq, a NATO flag flying in Baghdad, France would oppose this?

THE PRESIDENT France won't have to oppose that since it's not part of the mission entrusted to NATO and so won't happen. We won't need to oppose it, since this debate has taken place. Any NATO action, any trace, if I can put it like that, of NATO on Iraqi soil was considered inappropriate and to my mind justly.

Q. (...) Tomorrow you are going to accept Mr Durao Barroso as President of the Commission: he organized the Azores Summi (...). Why has France accepted him?

THE PRESIDENT (...) As things are at the moment, there is indeed a candidature which, I think, is going to be confirmed by Mr Barroso, France will definitely be in favour of this candidature. She has many reasons for this. First of all, I think Portugal is well placed. Portugal isn't a founder member, but a longstanding member, which gives her a special remit. From the French point of view, her geographical situation is indisputably an advantage. There is, it seems, a general consensus in Portugal, both in the Majority and Opposition, in support of this candidature. We all know Mr Barroso and we have respect and friendship for him. Consequently, if he confirms his candidature



and after the customary consultations, I can only see advantages in his candidature being accepted and subsequently submitted to the European Parliament, in line with the new rules.

(...)

Q. President Bush said recently that some of the past problems between the Allies on the Iraq question have been resolved. Do you, too, have the impression that everything has calmed down?

THE PRESIDENT You'll have noted that if there were problems and I'm not disputing the fact that there have been problems they didn't give rise to the slightest reaction of irritation or hostility on the part of the authorities or the French people. Consequently, if President Bush considers that these problems, which were differences of views on a matter of concern to the world, have now been resolved, I can only welcome the fact and naturally agree that he's right.

Q. You had a meeting with President Sezer. Can you tell us the main topics at the meeting?

THE PRESIDENT (...) We discussed first the organization of this summit, secondly Franco-Turkish relations, noting that they are excellent in the political, economic and cultural spheres. Thirdly, we discussed the procedure for examining Turkey's entry into the European Union. That's a subject the Turkish authorities are greatly concerned about, especially President Sezer. I told him again what my position is on this.

I've always thought that Turkey's integration into the European Union was desirable, once it was possible, naturally. First, because Turkey has historically, for a very long time been destined to play a role in Europe. Then, because for over 40 years now Turkey has been offered the prospect of one day joining the European Union in France's case, by all the successive heads of State and government during this period. This prospect, may I remind you, was confirmed in 1999 at the Helsinki European Summit at which her status as a candidate was recognized, and France was represented at the Helsinki summit both by me, as President of the Republic, and by M. Lionel Jospin, the Prime Minister.

Secondly, aside from these questions of principle, I think Turkey's future in Europe is justified because it is in our, Europe's, political interest, and in our economic interest as well to have a stable, democratic and modern Turkey who opted for secularism back in 1923. It's in our interest to have her with us and not outside. She could moreover in that capacity serve as an example to many parties in the great region in which she is situated. Yet before being able to join, one has always to respect the rules, as in every club, if I may say so. The rules are what we call the Copenhagen criteria and they pertain to human rights, freedoms and a market economy.



## PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

Everyone acknowledges that Turkey has made a considerable effort to meet the Copenhagen criteria over the past few years, especially at the legislative and institutional level. No one contests this. Consequently, the European Commission will be presenting a report to the European Council in October stating its finding. (...)

It is not for me to anticipate what the Commission's report will say. (...) If the Commission submits a favorable report then at that time, it will be up to the European Council, on the basis of this report, to decide to begin accession negotiations. We shouldn't be under any illusion these will be long and difficult, for both Europe and Turkey. (...) If by any chance the Commission were to find that Turkey is still not ready, then it would have to be postponed for six months, a year. We'll have to see what the Commission proposes.

But if you want my feeling, I think that at this point the momentum for Turkey's entry in the future, once it's possible, is irreversible for both parties, both sides, and, all things considered, is desirable.

Q. France wanted the handover to represent a break with the past in Iraq. Is this what you see today? (...)

THE PRESIDENT First, you know what my conviction is. That it's the necessary condition, but alas not enough, for resolving the conflict in Iraq; it's the assurance for all the Iraqi people, the Iraqi people themselves, that they genuinely hold the keys to their future. So it's an important step in that direction, in the spirit of UNSCR 1546. I've said it was necessary; I can't give you the assurance that it will be sufficient.

Q. I'd like to go back to Turkey. President Bush said that the European Union should begin negotiations immediately so as to admit Turkey as a full member of the European Union. You seem to be advocating going a bit more slowly. Do you think that President Bush went a bit too far?

THE PRESIDENT First, I'm not advocating going more slowly, I'm recommending proceeding sensibly. Second, if President Bush actually said that, the way I read it, well, not only did he go too far but he went onto territory which wasn't his. And he had no business giving any indication or direction whatsoever to the European Union in this sphere. It's rather like my telling the United States how to manage her relations with Mexico.

Q. (...) President Bush said this morning that the US was hoping to change NATO's mission so that it could address the threats of the twenty-first century. (...) Can you tell us how you yourself see the Alliance's future missions?

THE PRESIDENT For the time being NATO is what it is. It did undergo, in Prague, a profound change, which I mentioned earlier, with its enlargement. I'd like to remind you that well before Prague France had urged enlargement and had a lot of trouble [getting agreement for it]. At the time, we were almost alone



## PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

in advocating enlargement. I remember the battles I had with President Clinton at the time, especially on Romania. So NATO is restructuring gradually, little by little, seriously. That was what happened in Prague in terms of both enlargement and also new assets and greater flexibility, thanks to the NRF, and also in terms of our partnerships. So I think that NATO is what it is, an element which strengthens the requisite link of solidarity between the two sides of the Atlantic, and that's all to the good. |