



Televised speech given by M. Jacques CHIRAC, President of the Republic, on France's action to promote peace in Lebanon and the Middle East.

[Arabic translation available here \(PDF\)](#)

Paris, 24 august 2006

My fellow citizens,

Most of you have returned to work after the summer holiday period or are preparing to do so. The summer was dominated by the crisis in Lebanon. It is this crisis and the effort France is making for peace that I wish to speak to you about this evening.

I convened a restricted Cabinet meeting today to take decisions concerning the practical arrangements for France's participation in the peacekeeping force in Lebanon.

The war caused incalculable suffering and destruction in Lebanon, a country with which we have very close historical ties in a region of great sensitivity for world peace. For this reason, France became involved: involved in helping the population, involved in evacuating those of our citizens who wished to leave and involved in working to bring about an end to the fighting.

Resolution 1701, unanimously adopted by the United Nations Security Council at France's initiative, made possible a ceasefire, which is as yet fragile. This Resolution affirms Israel's right to security and Lebanon's right to exercise full sovereignty over the whole of its territory. This Resolution also includes a decision to reinforce the United Nations force, UNIFIL, to monitor the cessation of hostilities and to support the deployment of the Lebanese Army in the south of the country as the Israelis withdraw.

As an emergency measure, and to encourage this move, I decided last week, as a first step, to immediately double our UNIFIL contingent.

In addition, the 1,700 French soldiers taking part in the air and naval operations to supply UNIFIL since the beginning of the crisis will of course be kept in place.

It was necessary to respond to the emergency, but also to set the stage for a safe and effective operation. It was my responsibility to obtain a number of guarantees from the parties to the conflict and from the United Nations.



PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

We have received assurances from Lebanon and Israel that our force will be in a position to fulfil its mission on the ground.

I also asked the Secretary-General of the United Nations to ensure that the force would operate under optimum conditions of effectiveness and security. We have obtained the necessary clarifications from the United Nations: regarding the chain of command, which must be simple, coherent and responsive; and the rules of engagement, which must ensure freedom of movement for the force and its ability to take action if faced with hostile situations.

This force will be put in place. But it must be based on a fair distribution of contingents. I approached my counterparts to convince them fully to take part. Several European partners will do so, as will major Moslem countries in Asia. And I hope that other permanent members of the Security Council will also make a commitment to participate on the ground.

Today, the conditions put forward by France having been met, I have decided to respond favourably to the requests made by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Lebanese and Israeli governments.

Two additional battalions will extend our UNIFIL contingent on the ground. 2,000 French soldiers will thus be deployed as blue helmets in Lebanon. France is prepared, if the United Nations so wishes, to continue to assume command of the force. We will review these arrangements within six months in light of the changing situation.

The purpose of this French engagement is peace. In United Nations Resolution 1701, the international community unanimously sets out the principles of a lasting solution to this crisis. It involves the release of the abducted Israeli soldiers, the return of the Lebanese prisoners, the delineation of the borders, especially in the Shebaa Farms area, and the disarming of the militias, which is to take place within a Lebanese process. We must also facilitate the return of refugees and rapidly encourage a wave of solidarity to enable Lebanon to undertake the reconstruction it needs. An international conference will be needed. France is working on this.

My fellow citizens,

Attentive to the conditions in which our soldiers will be engaged and determined that France should take an active part in serving peace and stability, I believe at this time that the French soldiers can be deployed effectively. In this way, in a situation which everyone knows to be difficult, France will fully shoulder its responsibilities in Lebanon. At the start of the upcoming extraordinary session of the French Parliament, the government will make a statement, which will be followed by a debate on the issue. And I once again call on the international community as a whole to take part in this effort, which is indispensable for building peace in Lebanon and in the Near East.

|