



## **Opening address by Mr Jacques CHIRAC, President of the French Republic on the occasion of the Ambassadors' Conference.**

Elysée Palace, Paris, Monday 28 August 2006.

Prime Minister,  
President of the Senate,  
President of the National Assembly,  
Minister of Foreign Affairs,  
Ministers,  
Members of Parliament,  
Ambassadors,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to welcome you to the Elysee Palace for this opening session of the French Ambassadors' Conference, which is taking place with the participation of Mr. Douste-Blazy and the members of Government who assist him in his work.

At a time when domestic and international issues are increasingly intertwined, France knows she can count on you :

- to convey to all continents, on all fronts, the universal values of our Republic and the commitment of our country to peace, human rights, justice, solidarity and the equal dignity of cultures;
- to serve an enterprising France that exports, innovates and creates, a France that holds its own in the globalisation process;
- to provide assistance to our fellow citizens in emergencies - and here I wish to pay particular tribute to the women and men who took part in the humanitarian operations in Lebanon.

Once again, the Middle East appeals to our universal conscience. In a few short days we saw Lebanon laid to waste, its people battered, fifteen years of effort obliterated. At the same time, Israel went through an ordeal of vulnerability that reawakened old spectres. A few weeks earlier, the door to hope had closed for the Palestinian people. In both cases, irresponsible provocations and the reactions they elicited pushed the entire region to the brink.

The deadly sequence of events revealed the complexity of overlapping situations. Israel aspires to security, Lebanon thirsts after freedom, the Palestinian people cries out for justice. But it is clear to all that in the Middle East, fault lines intersect and crises compound each other. The endless



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Israeli-Palestinian conflict fuels incomprehension at a world order that tolerates injustice. The instability in Iraq and tensions in the Persian Gulf radiate across the Middle East. Radical groups attempt to exercise a veto over peace. With its rich diversity, Lebanon attracts the blows the protagonists do not dare to inflict on each other. Beyond these confrontations, a major danger looms - the danger of estrangement between the different worlds, between East and West, Islam and Christianity, rich and poor.

In the din of arms, France mobilised to stop the escalation of violence. Resolution 1701, drawn up at France's initiative and adopted unanimously, put an end to the fighting. This document also provides the framework for a lasting solution based on the security of Israel and the sovereignty of Lebanon over its entire territory. All parties are faced with their responsibilities: the alternative is between a resumption of hostilities, which would open an unbridgeable chasm between two neighbouring peoples, and the political option of an overall lasting solution. The future of Lebanon and the security of Israel, as well as the stability of the region as a whole, are at stake.

Already, Mr. Siniora's government has taken the courageous decision to deploy the Lebanese Army in the south. The Resolution outlines a process leading to the disarming of the militias and the settlement of border issues, including that of the Shebaa Farms area; it is up to the United Nations Secretary-General to set this political process in motion. I call on Israel to lift without delay the blockade that is seriously damaging the Lebanese economy and hindering progress toward returning to normal.

France, for its part, has shouldered its responsibilities. I decided to substantially reinforce our commitment to UNIFIL. Our teams are already on the ground working to rebuild major infrastructure, repair ecological damage and provide humanitarian assistance. I call for a vast wave of solidarity within the framework of an international conference, on which France is working. But nothing is possible without the help of all the countries in the region. Precisely because Lebanon has for far too long been the theatre of their confrontations, all must understand that it is in their interest for Lebanon to be a sovereign and independent country in which the State exercises exclusive authority throughout its entire territory. This is the best guarantee of their legitimate interests, and particularly of their security.

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This crisis of an unprecedented nature was caused by other stalemates. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict concentrates all the incomprehension between different worlds, the feeling that the fundamental principles have variable geometry. And yet the shape of a settlement is clear to all. There is a consensus, including between Israel and the Palestinians, in favour of two States coexisting side-by-side in peace and security. But mutual trust has been eroded.

The challenge is to restore that trust so as to re-start diplomacy. It is incumbent on the parties to define the parameters of a settlement. But the



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involvement of the international community is key. We must help them to overcome the impasse by guaranteeing the peace that they sketch out.

Of course, circumstances are not propitious. Hamas has not yet taken on board the implications of its entry into political life by accepting the cessation of violence, recognition of Israel and the Oslo agreements. But President Abbas personifies the Palestinian people's commitment to a negotiated peace and Prime Minister Olmert has placed negotiations among his leading options.

Nothing, therefore, should prevent a resumption of the dialogue. The moderate Arab States, who confirmed their fundamental change of attitude toward Israel at the Beirut Summit in 2002, have an essential role to play.

To resign oneself to the status quo means risking a cycle of violence spiralling out of control. Israel legitimately aspires to security, but there is no security without justice. The security of Israel is indissolubly linked to the creation of a Palestinian State within secure and viable borders. But ensuring the legitimate rights of the Palestinians does not justify denial - which is intolerable - of Israel's right to exist or recourse to terrorism.

Under these circumstances, it is imperative that the diplomatic process be re-started immediately. To that end I call for a meeting of the Quartet to be held soon.

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Iran and Syria are also faced with the challenge of peace and security.

Iran will not achieve security by developing secret programmes, but rather by fully becoming part of the international community. I once again urge Tehran to take the necessary steps to create a climate of trust. There is still scope for dialogue. Iran is a great country. But recognition of its role also places it under an obligation - an obligation to allay apprehensions and to work for regional stability, as befits a responsible great country.

With regard to Syria, Syria must break with its self-imposed isolation. Its vocation is to resume its place among nations, while respecting international legality and the sovereignty of its neighbours. The Middle East needs a Syria that actively serves peace and regional stability.

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Ambassadors, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Beyond the history of our wars and our reconciliations, it is the great challenges of the present that lend full legitimacy to the construction of Europe. Peoples will renew their commitment to Europe if it proves able, against the backdrop of disorder in the world, to make proposals and take action in response to globalization.

The future of the European project is today predicated on Europe's ability to be a leading political player.



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It must be a player able to contribute to a constructive dialogue with the major world powers. The Europeans must, to this end, overcome their inhibitions and negotiate with their partners on the basis of the objective interests of our continent. It must, in particular, do more to take the emergence of China - where I will be going in a few weeks' time - on board.

It must be a player that can mobilize its power to serve peace. Europe was insufficiently active in the Lebanese crisis, although France had recommended on a number of occasions that the High Representative be given a mandate to speak and act on behalf of the twenty-five member countries, as he is doing in the Iranian issue. The fact that Europe is proving its ability to engage - in Macedonia, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in Aceh and in the Democratic Republic of Congo - gives us all the more grounds for nurturing this ambition.

A great challenge lies ahead in the western Balkans, where the European Union has made a commitment to support the process leading toward final status in Kosovo. It must prepare to take over from NATO in a process similar to the one used in Bosnia. France will do its part.

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It is through this kind of engagement that the European Union will make its full contribution to the Transatlantic solidarity that constitutes one of the component parts of our security. In a few weeks' time, the NATO Summit will be taking place in Riga. We want this meeting to be a success and to mark a further milestone in the adaptation of the Alliance.

We will achieve this by upholding NATO's legitimacy as a military organisation guaranteeing the collective security of the European and North American allies. To seek to involve the Alliance in non-military missions, ad hoc partnerships, technological ventures or an insufficiently prepared enlargement could only distort its purpose.

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To assert Europe's identity against the backdrop of globalization, as our citizens aspire to do, we must take up the challenge of innovation, competitiveness and employment. Thanks to its courageous reforms, our country, together with Germany, has now achieved an outstanding improvement in growth and employment.

Let us consolidate this trend by forging ahead with European projects, with a particular focus on ensuring long-term energy security for our continent and on meeting the challenge of climate change. Following the Saint Petersburg G8 Summit, this will be one of the issues before the European Council when it meets in Finland in October. It is also a major goal in the crucial negotiations now getting under way on the future of the international climate change regime after 2012.

To respond to globalization we must work in partnership with the countries of origin and transit, as we made a commitment to do in Rabat, to fight the organized crime rings involved in illegal immigration. At the same time we must address the underlying causes of the phenomenon by helping Africa to move



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forward on the road to development so that it can offer its young people a future in dignity.

Thanks to the reforms Africa has undertaken, thanks to our partnership, African growth is accelerating and should be close to five percent this year. Europe must fully commit to raising fresh resources to consolidate this trend, which is of vital importance for our common future. France is in the vanguard of this movement, increasing its official development assistance from 0.3 percent of GDP in 2001 to 0.5 percent in 2007, and fighting to obtain innovative additional funding.

To respond to globalization, we must make a success of enlargement, which extends peace, democracy and prosperity to our continent as a whole. Commitments have been made that will be lived up to. But let us not wage this process as if it were a foregone conclusion. It must be controlled, understood and accepted by peoples. This is the purpose of the debate on the Union's ability to absorb new countries that France has called for and that we must carry out under the Finnish Presidency.

Enlargement makes the issue of democratic expression in the institutions of the Union all the more acute. We are confident that the Finnish Presidency will make this issue a focus of the debate on the institutions in the run up to the German Presidency of the Union in 2007, under which we will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, followed by the French Presidency in 2008.

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The crisis in the Middle East has again demonstrated the central role played by the United Nations Organisation in the international arena.

At the opening session of the General Assembly in New York, I will be reaffirming the need for United Nations reform, and in particular for the enlargement of the Security Council so as to bolster its long-term ability to assume its primary responsibility under the Charter in the service of peace and security.

On this occasion I will also reiterate that there can be no justice or stability without solidarity, and continue my struggle for international solidarity by launching Unitaid.

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Africa also remains at the heart of our endeavour to bring about a world of greater justice and solidarity. But the renewal I mentioned remains fragile; it is threatened by the conflicts that continue to rage on the continent.

In Côte d'Ivoire, the only way to overcome the crisis is to hold free and fair elections based on new electoral rolls. The Security Council and the African Union are committed to this, in order to ensure that voice of reason prevails.





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In the Darfur conflict, Sudan must accept the deployment of the UN operation supported by the African Union. An end must be put to this tragedy, which is destabilising the entire region. France is fully taking part in the humanitarian effort and supporting the African AMIS force.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, France and the European Union are lending support on the ground to the elections now under way. France calls on all parties to respect the verdict of the Congolese people, which was a clear endorsement of peace and national reconciliation. The time has come to silence the weapons and embark on a course of stability, peace and growth.

To ward off the danger of an estrangement between the different worlds, we must also work to preserve cultural diversity and promote a dialogue of civilizations. This will be my message to the Francophony Summit in Bucharest in a few weeks' time.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

France occupies a unique place in Europe and in the world by virtue of the values it represents, the vision it upholds and the hope it embodies.

We have a duty to use this unique capacity for influence and action to avert the dangers and make the most of our country's enormous assets in a globalizing world, and to build for our children a world of greater security, justice and solidarity.

Thank you.

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