



Press conference given by M. Jacques CHIRAC, President of the Republic, during the informal meeting of European Union Heads of State and Government (Excerpts).

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Lahti, 20 October 2006

THE PRESIDENT - (•••) We discussed three topics over lunch: energy, with, in particular, our the 27 of us preparation of this evening's meeting with President Putin, immigration, and the situation in Darfur, at Tony Blair's instigation. This afternoon, as you know, we talked about the problems to do with innovation and competitiveness in the European Union.

The implementation of a European energy policy will be one of the major challenges of the German presidency which is going to start at the beginning of next year. As you know, France will wholeheartedly support the German presidency in this.

I proposed, among other things, moving ahead on three subjects which for me have priority, and the German presidency has fully approved. Firstly, energy efficiency; secondly, development of second-generation biofuels and clean coal; and thirdly, of course, the battle against climate change, which is increasingly emerging as one of the priorities in current international discussions, especially within the European Union.

Our discussions on the external aspects of a European energy policy were fruitful. By bringing consistency to the EU's instruments for external action, i.e. the CFSP, trade policy and external dimension of the European environment policy, we can hope to make positive progress towards a balanced European energy policy, by developing a comprehensive strategy with our suppliers. I proposed the organization next year of a European energy summit, to lay the foundations for a necessary partnership on these issues.

Our meeting this evening with President Putin will in this respect be important. For us, as you know, Russia is an extremely important supplier, particularly for gas. So it's in the interest of the European Union and Russia to agree. Transcending the present difficulties requires movement on both sides. Russia has legitimate interests. It's natural for her to defend them.



PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

Europe has legitimate interests which it too has to defend, of course. We devoted our efforts to seeking harmony between these legitimate interests.

On the Energy Charter, we reached a milestone, as you know, in Saint Petersburg at the G8, with Moscow's reaffirmation of its support for the principles of the Energy Charter. In Compiègne we discussed this at length with Mr Putin and Mrs Merkel; and we urged President Putin to firm up his commitments approving the principles of the Energy Charter.

Today, the Commission has proposed adopting this Charter's principles in the future European Union-Russia agreement, for which negotiations are beginning, as you know, in November. And of course we, in any case I totally agree with this Commission proposal. I made this clear after the President of the Commission's speech.

Europe is being constructive in all these areas. It would like Russia too to adopt a partnership approach, particularly to European investments, one based on freedom, controlled freedom for European investments in Russia. This is the message we're going shortly to convey to President Putin in the report Prime Minister Vanhanen will give of our discussions.

We also discussed immigration with Mr Prodi, Mr Zapatero and five other EU Mediterranean countries. On 25 September we wrote to the Finnish presidency asking Europe to mobilize in the face of the urgent immigration situation. The migration crisis is a matter of concern to the whole of Europe. Our response, in the spirit of the Rabat EU-African conference, has to combine a ruthless battle against the criminal networks responsible for illegal immigration with a general co-development approach.

Obviously, and I spoke on this point, population growth as we can see it in the next 40 years, which is going to more than double Africa's population, without obviously the means of feeding being able to keep pace requires a genuine development policy which, for the moment, we don't have the resources to implement. Which means we have to look for resources outside State budgets which won't keep pace and seek, through innovative financing, how to provide the essential resources for development to enable these people, who are of course leaving their homelands only because they can't survive there, to stay put.

The time has come for the European Union to frame a European immigration policy which will have to deal with the right of asylum, border surveillance and the regularizations [of illegals]. We'll come back to this in greater detail in December. As regards the mass amnesties which have taken place here and there in Europe, I said that I perfectly understood every country taking decisions and defining its own immigration policy for political, economic, social and moral reasons. It's not for me to give an opinion on this point. But from the moment we're all in the Schengen system, everyone bears the consequences of them and so everyone must, at the very least, be involved in the decisions taken in this sphere.



PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

Our discussions this afternoon were devoted to the ways of encouraging innovation in Europe. This is obviously crucial for future growth and jobs. It's a key issue if we want to maintain the EU's competitiveness in the face of the challenges which, among others, the fast-emerging countries like China and India are issuing to the modern world.

We also talked about concrete initiatives on financing innovation, support for small and medium-size businesses and the links between research and industry.

That's what we talked about during this useful and interesting summit organized by the Finnish Presidency.

(...)

QUESTION I apologise for returning to the subject of Vladimir Putin's presence and the recent murder of the journalist Anna Politkovskaya. Are you yourself going to talk to President Putin about it?

THE PRESIDENT - Not only did I talk to him about it following that murder, but I made a point of personally writing to her children to tell them of the shock, horror I felt at that murder, and I've made no secret of it. We, I asked President Putin for the investigation which Russia was going to carry out to be extremely serious and transparent and, of course, to be made public so that everyone knows what happened, in as incontrovertible a way as is possible in this sort of incident. So I think that we'll say the same thing to President Putin. Thank you.

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