



New Year's Eve broadcast to the french by M. Jacques CHIRAC, President of the Republic

Paris, 31 December 2006

My dear compatriots in metropolitan and overseas France, and abroad,

On the eve of 2007, which will be a particularly important year for our country's future, from the bottom of my heart, I extend my warmest wishes to each and every one of you.

And my thoughts go first to all those who are alone, sick or in distress.

I want too to salute with respect and gratitude our soldiers who, throughout the world, are defending peace and France's values.

Together, ever since I have had the honour of serving and representing you, we have experienced substantial changes.

A rapidly growing global economy. Competition which is becoming ever sharper, but also opening up new opportunities for us. The Internet revolution, which is transforming our way of communicating, working and living in society. A world in which the excessive exploitation of natural resources is upsetting the climate and will endanger mankind, if we don't react right now. A world which has never been so rich and also, at the same time, so poor. A world scarred by 11 September, terrorism, the war in Iraq, the crisis in the Middle East, the absurd and irresponsible temptation to incite the clash of civilizations and cultures.

Because I passionately love France, I fight for her to play her full role in this new world while remaining true to herself. I fight so that all France's citizens, especially all her young people, get their chance, wherever they live and regardless of their origins.

Of course, I'd like things to progress faster and in a better way for every one of you. But thanks to your talent, thanks to your work, France is gaining ground. With the resolute action of the Prime Minister and his government, unemployment is falling significantly: already 360,000 fewer jobless. We have growth and it's solid. Our pension and social security systems are being reformed and this guarantees their future. The number of new social housing units has doubled every year since 2002. Our attitudes towards the disabled, cancer victims, road accident victims are all changing for the better. Thanks to your active efforts, nearly 9,000 lives have been saved on French roads.



PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

My twin imperatives between now and the elections will be for the government to be working, at your service, on security, jobs and purchasing power; and for these months also to be a time of open, democratic and responsible debate and I shall commit myself fully to this. This evening I'd like to tell you what, in my eyes, are the major challenges.

The first is unite and come together in support of the values which make France what she is: freedom, humanism, respect, and particularly respect for diversity and for differences, secularity (*laïcité*), the fight against racism, anti-Semitism, communautarisme (ghettoization). Don't listen to the preachers of extremism. France is strong, France is beautiful when she is able, at one and the same time, to enforce her rules and hold out her hand in friendship.

The second challenge is obviously to achieve economic and social progress. I know the suffering and difficulties some of you are enduring. I am aware of your expectations vis-à-vis salaries and purchasing power, i.e. a fair reward for your work. But beware of ideologies, illusions and the return to recipes which don't work. It's work, training and research which make modern economies strong. Fully maintaining the social dialogue, important reforms lie ahead of us: to go far further in reducing unemployment, make broadening share ownership a genuine societal goal, give our businesses more power, and establish a genuine enforceable right to housing, i.e. to make the right to housing a reality and I'm asking the government take action on this within the next few weeks.

The third challenge is to recognize that France has special responsibilities in the world. France's natural and honourable mission is to speak out forcefully and independently for peace and justice. This is also in her interest. With our promotion of the development of the poorest countries we are, of course, addressing an essential moral imperative. But we're also preventing the influx at our borders of all those leaving their countries because they no longer have any hope.

The fourth challenge is Europe. For a year and a half, we have opted to take forward a European agenda geared to delivering results: in the spheres of research, energy, security and immigration. Let's never forget that Europe is the guarantee of peace and democracy on our continent. So it's our future. The 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, on 25 March next year, offers us the opportunity to breathe new life into the task of building Europe: a political Europe, a Europe with economic ambition and enhancing social progress, and a Europe which protects us. France will naturally play her full part in this.

Finally, there is the ecological challenge. It's an immediate challenge. A political challenge. France was the first country in the world to include, in 2005, a reference to an Environmental Charter in her Constitution. In February, she will be hosting an international conference to speed up progress towards a World Environment Organization. But at home too, we have to win this battle by radically changing our behaviour and our policies. It's an imperative and an opportunity. With the necessity of devising an environmentally-friendly



PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

economy, a new industrial revolution lies ahead of us, that of sustainable development. It will be a source of growth and jobs and France has all the assets to become its champion.

My dear compatriots,

Yes, we can be proud of being French! Let's pursue our modernization effort. Let's not seek to imitate. Let's be ourselves. Next spring, you will have some decisive choices to make. Stand up vigorously for your beliefs. You are the sovereign people. France needs each and every one of you. She is counting on you.

Long live the Republic! Long live France!./.

|