



## European Council preliminary statement by M. Jacques CHIRAC, President of the Republic, at his press conference (excerpts)

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Brussels, 15 December 2006

Ladies and gentlemen, let me underline how well Finland and the Finns have organized their work and conducted their presidency.

What did we do at this Council?

### **ENLARGEMENT/TURKEY**

We began by talking about the enlargement problems. First of all, Turkey. We had to react to Turkey's non-compliance with the Ankara Protocol, i.e. her commitments vis-à-vis the customs union with Cyprus. The Council came to an agreement on the basis of the Commission's recommendations. I believe one can say that the EU's reaction is balanced. France had supported this recommendation from the outset. It involves freezing eight chapters and the non-closure of negotiations on the others for as long as the situation we're experiencing today i.e. non-compliance with the Ankara Protocol lasts. There will be annual reports from the Commission which will provide us with an informed background to future decisions.

### **BALKANS**

Still on enlargement, we talked at length, particularly at yesterday evening's dinner, about the prospects as regards the Balkans. We were unanimous in confirming that the Balkans' future lies in Europe. As you'll remember, France had instigated this proposal at the meeting I'd convened in Zagreb, which launched the process. In particular, Croatia's encouraging progress was unanimously highlighted. We talked at length about Serbia, an essential country for the region. Her future lies in Europe. But fulfilment of the conditions regarding effective cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal is absolutely essential in order to move in the direction everyone agrees we want to go.

### **CAPACITY OF INTEGRATION**



We also adopted the conclusions on the capacity of integration. As you know, at the beginning of this presidency, France had forcefully stressed the essential need for a definition of the conditions for the future enlargements. France has never been against the enlargements. But she has always taken the view that a number of conditions had to be met, and that it was necessary to take into consideration the political situation, public opinion, the economic and financial situation and the consequences of the enlargements for the common policies. The enlargements must never take place to the detriment of the common policies, or of their financing, particularly that of the Common Agricultural Policy. France doesn't want it to be a victim of the enlargements. Yes to enlargement, but with a genuine assessment of the political, economic and financial consequences.

### **INSTITUTIONS**

The institutions. Yesterday evening, the Finnish presidency reported to us on the institutions. This will be a major issue for the forthcoming German presidency and remain high on the agenda until the 2008 French presidency. You know how things are today. The institutions have to be modified, tailored to the enlargement. The European Union can't function properly with the present institutions. This was the purpose of the Convention, which had made serious proposals - it has to be recognized - to improve and adapt these institutions. This hasn't happened, particularly because of the positions of France and the Netherlands in the referenda on the Constitution. We are now in the situation of having to find some way or other of improving the institutions, without of course going against the public opinion of the countries which gave their views - or in fact those which haven't yet done so or have refused to do so, given the situation. Germany is going to set the process in motion. She will have France's support. It will be for France, in 2008, during her presidency, to wind it up.

### **PROJECT-BASED EUROPE**

Project-based Europe. This was the major process France had launched at the Hampton Court summit. The debate has developed satisfactorily, particularly on immigration, energy and innovation.

### **IMMIGRATION/DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE/INNOVATIVE FUNDING**

On immigration, we reaffirmed the European Union's solidarity with the member States affected by illegal immigration. The solution is a comprehensive one. I stressed that the fight against immigration, which is necessary, had first and above all to target poverty. It was unrealistic to think that development assistance could be funded solely by increasing State budgets. Even if they step up their efforts and achieve 0.7% [of GDP] in the coming years, these resources will be inadequate. So it's the wrong avenue to take. There's no solution other than creating innovative financing, i.e. finance linked, some way or other, to the increase in international wealth or in international trade. Thanks to this innovative financing, we'll find the means needed to fund



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the essential development assistance. Essential for political, moral and economic reasons. Everyone is more or less of this view, but not to the extent of concretely subscribing to it.

### **PLANE TAX/UNITAID**

I remind you that France has proposed making a special gesture by creating a tax on plane tickets. It's now in force. I reminded our colleagues that the fears which had been expressed in France and elsewhere on the potential consequences of this light tax on plane tickets were groundless. Nevertheless, a number of major airlines are continuing to put pressure on their governments not to adopt it. France has adopted it, other countries have now adopted it.

Thanks to UNITAID, whose board is chaired by Philippe Douste-Blazy, there's funding for the medicines needed in the South to treat the major pandemics: tuberculosis, AIDS and malaria. The second advantage of this innovative funding is that we're trialling a new method of increasing international contributions to official development assistance.

### **ENERGY/UNEO**

Energy. I expanded on the theme of the close link between the fight against the consequences of greenhouse gases, particularly on climate change, and security of energy supplies. On 2 and 3 February next year I'll be convening an international conference, to which I have invited all the other European Union members and 60 or so other countries which have all demonstrated support for a United Nations Environment Organization. This international conference will have three aims: first, to make a joint assessment of the situation with respect to the climate and biodiversity. Second, to make joint proposals for priority action in these areas. Finally, to formally create a pressure group, an action group which already includes around 50 countries, to seek and obtain the international community's agreement on transforming UNEP, the United Nations Environment Programme, into a United Nations Environment Organization, i.e. an organization capable of taking charge of things, taking and enforcing decisions, drawing up international rules, gradually covering all these problems.

### **INNOVATION**

Innovation. We have launched joint technological initiatives concerning, in particular, on-board information systems, the aerospace industry, hydrogen, fuel cells, nano-electronics, global monitoring of the environment and security in short, all the problems relating to a policy of innovation and [technological] progress in the knowledge area.

### **INTERNATIONAL ISSUES**

Finally, we discussed international issues. I won't go into detail. They are the subject of a whole series of declarations, including one to which France



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was especially committed, on the Middle East and Lebanon. The Council expressed the European Union's unanimous support for the institutions lawfully and democratically established in Lebanon and for the government led by Prime Minister Siniora. (•••)

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