



Speech by Mr Jacques Chirac, President of the French Republic, on the occasion of New Year's Greetings from the Diplomatic Corps.

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Elysée Palace, Paris, Friday 5 January 2007.

Prime Minister,
Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Ministers,
Ambassadors,
Your Excellency, Papal Nuncio,

Thank you for your words, warm and full of wisdom as always. I should like to extend in turn my very best wishes to you and ask you to convey to His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI my most respectful greetings and the best wishes of the French people.

Ever faster change in the world, heightened international tension at the gates of Europe and the urgent need for a collective response to the challenges facing humanity must be a central focus for the upcoming agenda, which will be crucial for the future of France.

France is the bearer of an independent worldview shaped by the values it embodies, and by its involvement in European and international forums. France has a special responsibility to serve peace, European integration, international solidarity and multilateralism.

Since the end of the bipolar world order, globalisation, like a tidal wave, is upsetting the old balances and reconfiguring international power.

In less than a generation, we have seen the collapse of communism and the dead ends to which unilateralism leads. Day by day, we see ever more clearly delineated the new configuration of a multipolar world as Russia recovers and as China, India and Brazil achieve the status of global powers. We are witnessing, especially in Asia, the emergence of new forms of modernity. Rooted in cultures that are millennia old in some cases, that emergence marks the end of the age-old exclusive domination of the West over the rest of the world.

In less than a generation, we have moved on from the proclaimed victory of liberalism to a new awareness of the flagrant inequalities that persist on most continents, notably in Africa, and the ecological crisis that threatens the



whole of humanity.

In less than a generation, we have moved on from a compartmentalised world to one in which, through the screens of global communication, every individual can know at any time what is happening anywhere in the world. A world in which points of reference are blurred, in which many peoples hesitate between the dizzying uncertainties of an as yet inscrutable future and the temptations to withdraw into their own communities.

In this new world now being born, where the frontiers between international questions and domestic issues are fading, France refuses to accept either the inevitability of future confrontation or the easy option of inaction. Faithful to its history, strengthened by its experience and the founding values of its republican pact, it is the bearer of an ambition to see a reconciled, reunited world capable of taking its destiny into its own hands.

Because the world has entered into a new era, we must leave behind us mindsets dictated by habit and deploy our diplomatic action in new contexts. Because the world is threatened by a conflict of civilisations, one fuelled by a clash of ignorance on all sides, France has chosen to be at the forefront of a combat for dialogue between cultures, particularly in the context of the Francophonie, and in UNESCO, by ensuring that cultural diversity is enshrined in international law. Because the extreme poverty that continues to exist in an increasingly wealthy world is as much a moral scandal as it is an economic absurdity and a political danger, France has gone against the taboos. In particular, France has undertaken pioneering action on innovative financing mechanisms. Because the destruction of the environment compromises the very future of humankind, France has placed ecology at the heart of its Constitution and the priorities of its diplomacy.

In our globalised universe, crises, once circumscribed, now disseminate their destabilising effects far beyond their original source.

At the gates of Europe, the Middle East has become the epicentre of international tension. It is there that crises build and spread. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict fosters a sense of incomprehension and injustice throughout the Muslim world, as though the new international order was built on double standards.

As France sensed and feared, the war in Iraq has triggered upheavals whose effects have not yet ceased to unfold. This adventure has exacerbated the divisions between communities and undermined the very integrity of Iraq. It has compromised the stability of the entire region, where every country is now concerned for its security. It has given terrorism a new field into which to expand. More than ever the priority must be to restore full sovereignty to the Iraqis.

What this means is that in this region, the cradle of the three major monotheistic religions, Europe's neighbour and natural partner, we are



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witnessing a merging of different conflicts, and the risk is of a clash on a scale at which we cannot even guess.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict crystallises the resentment felt on all sides. It is therefore here that the inevitability of failure must be forestalled. We know what the outline of a settlement would be: two States living in peace and security. The roadmap accepted by all parties has marked out the path to that outcome. On each side there are representatives and they are once again talking to each other. What is still lacking is trust. It is the duty of the international community to institute the process that will enable that trust to be restored. Strengthened by its commitments on the ground, Europe is now in a position to act. Let us propose, through the Quartet, an international conference of a new type which, without setting out to dictate to the parties the terms of any settlement, would provide the guarantees to which they aspire. This will allow, I am convinced, an effective dynamic of negotiation to be set in train.

Lebanon, a country that is hostage to its neighbours, is paying a heavy price for the region's conflicts. France has no greater ambition than to see a sovereign, independent and democratic Lebanon and wishes to maintain its relationship of trust with all Lebanon's communities. Strengthened by their country's founding values of pluralism and freedom, the Lebanese must now come together to build their future free of outside interference. Gathered around a legitimate government and seeking truth, in particular through the establishment of a tribunal of an international character, together they will be able to rebuild their country. The Paris Conference on the reconstruction of Lebanon, made possible by the effort the Lebanese themselves have resolved to make, will provide on 25 January next an opportunity to translate our solidarity into action.

The international community expects Syria to contribute to the restoration of stability, thus fully taking on its role. It is in this way that we shall be able to move forward together towards the just and comprehensive peace for which France is a tireless advocate.

Iran, which desires to play to the full in the Middle East a role commensurate with its millennia-old civilisation, is fuelling the world's concern with its proliferation activities and the provocative and unacceptable declarations made by certain of its leaders. It is Iran's responsibility to restore confidence by means of a sovereign act. Suspension of its enrichment-related activities, at the very time the negotiations desired by the international community commenced, would open the way to cooperation and subsequently to a new partnership in furtherance of stability, peace and prosperity in the region as a whole, while fully respecting Iran's political choices.

Ladies and gentlemen,

At a time of great tension, Europe, because it has been capable of overcoming its historical rivalries, is a continent of peace and democracy today, a focus of stability and a model for the other great world regions.



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With the creation of the euro, the progress made on European defence and foreign policy, and enlargement - which confers upon the Union critical size in relation to the world's giants - we have laid the foundations for a renewal of European power.

And I warmly welcome the entry of Romania and Bulgaria into the European Union.

The rejection of the constitutional treaty by the French and Dutch peoples has however left the project unfinished. This revealed at one and the same time the questions raised by the course the construction of Europe has taken and by the capacity of a wider and more diverse Union to instil confidence in its citizens, especially the most vulnerable, in the face of the winds of globalisation.

I should like today to express my firm belief that European integration, born of Franco-German reconciliation, is one of contemporary history's most important achievements. Its continuation is vital for France, for our security, for our economic development and for our place in the world.

In order to respond to the legitimate concerns expressed by our fellow citizens, we have set out to rebuild confidence by giving priority to a project-based Europe and by restoring the balance between the goals of enlargement and deeper union.

In a few weeks, we shall be celebrating in Berlin the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty of Rome. This anniversary must provide an opportunity to reach a new consensus on the ultimate goals of the European project; a consensus to open the way to decisions on how to improve the functioning of the Union, since the urgent need of reform is evident to all of us today. In order to arrive at a new agreement - in the period between the German presidency in 2007 and the French presidency in 2008 - we must take as our starting point the balances defined in the draft constitutional treaty, highlighting an insistence on democracy.

Over and above the institutions, priority must be given during the next few years to the implementation of European responses to the major challenges of our time: the means for economic, industrial and scientific power; demography; co-development and control of migratory flows; energy security and climate change; food security; the preservation of our social model; dialogue between cultures and integration; the rising power of China and India, and so on.

In the face of hardening international rivalry and intensifying competition from the principal emerging economies, we must develop a coherent economic policy at European level.

We must extract maximum potential from the enlarged market by encouraging innovation and modernising competition policy in order to foster the creation of European industrial and scientific champions in strategic sectors, as France has taken the initiative of doing in setting up its Agency for Innovation in Industry.



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It would be a delusion to think that Europe can win against international competition by dismantling its social model. Our strength comes from cohesion. Over the coming years, we must travel further down the road to social harmonisation and tax harmonisation.

We must extract maximum potential from the single currency by putting in place, like the United States, Japan and China, an active foreign exchange policy that serves not only the combat against inflation but also growth and employment.

And lastly, we must extract maximum potential from the Union's commercial power by imposing, within the multilateral framework, greater consideration for social and environmental concerns, and by negotiating bilateral agreements based on reciprocity with our main partners among the emerging countries, especially with regard to investment and access to public procurement contracts for our companies.

Energy security and the combat against climate change go hand in hand. We must invest massively in the development of the clean energies of the future: not only biofuels and hydrogen but also nuclear power, as we are now doing with the development of fourth-generation reactors and ITER. At the same time, we must speed up the fundamental changes in our patterns of production and consumption in order to put Europe at the forefront of the next industrial revolution: that of sustainable development.

But we are all aware that the ecological challenge is planetary in scale. Europe must retain a leading role in the post-Kyoto negotiations. It must also consider the introduction of a "carbon tax" on products from countries that refuse to take action against global warming after 2012.

Faced with the challenge of immigration, the Union must over the coming years reinforce its capacity to act against organised illegal immigration and harmonise its asylum policies. This also presupposes, necessarily, a change in the scale of our cooperation policy, assigning very high priority to co-development with sub-Saharan Africa and with the Mediterranean, especially the Maghreb, which forms our immediate neighbourhood and shares with us a common destiny.

Our citizens expect Europe to exert its full influence in world affairs. We must deepen the strategic partnerships that have been put in place, at France's instigation, with the world's major countries or regions, for example with Russia or in Asia, with China, India, Japan and ASEAN, or with Latin America.

Since the Franco-British Summit in Saint-Malo, we have given Europe an independent voice on the international stage and a capacity to intervene in furtherance of peace. Over the coming years, we must take additional steps to build the Europe of defence.

Progress has been made in pooling the means and capabilities for command. We must undertake the construction of an effective European projection force,



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based on the capabilities of France, Germany, their Eurocorps partners and the countries committed to serve under the flag of the Union, such as Italy, Spain and Poland. Moreover, this development can but help strengthen the Atlantic Alliance as a whole.

Ladies and gentlemen,

France believes above all in the values of human rights. It campaigns for international justice and the abolition of the death penalty. It plays a leading role in furthering development, peace and collective action, as well as the respect for the identities and the equal dignity of cultures embodied in the United Nations, the fountainhead of international legitimacy.

I have complete confidence in the new Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. BAN ki-moon, to commit himself, like his predecessor, to the service of peace, democracy and international solidarity. I remain convinced that enlargement of the Security Council is essential to the reinforcement of its legitimacy.

Whether the matter at issue is the economic and social governance of globalisation, the preservation of the major ecological balances or dialogue between civilisations, global challenges now require cooperation between all responsible actors, and especially the principal emerging countries. That is the meaning given by France since the Evian Summit in 2003 to the G8 Enlarged Dialogue. That is the direction in which we must go over the years to come in all forums for concerted action and dialogue.

The international community must take on unequivocally the collective responsibilities incumbent upon it.

If we are to prevent humanitarian tragedies and cope with emergencies, we must implement the "responsibility to protect" which France has had enshrined in the United Nations. Here I particularly have in mind the tragedy in Darfur, which is threatening to drag into a destructive conflict all the countries in Central Africa and beyond.

However, leaving aside the conflicts with which it is burdened, Africa is today on a promising path to growth that must be encouraged. We must give full rein to our partnership with this continent in support of the reforms undertaken in the spirit of NEPAD. This will be the central issue at the next Africa-France Summit I shall be hosting in Cannes on 15-16 February.

If the Millennium Goals are to be attained in health, water, education and infrastructures, we must also progress toward the implementation of innovative financing mechanisms, an avenue opened up by France with the air-ticket solidarity levy. This pilot experiment should be extended to provide the international community with long-term resources to finance global public goods.



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In 2002 in Johannesburg, I called for the mobilisation of nations to confront the ecological disaster that threatens our planet. Every passing day brings confirmation of its reality. Every passing day raises the cost of inaction. France has taken the steps that must be taken. France intends to remain in the forefront of international action and advocates the creation of a United Nations Environment Organisation. Stepping up this mobilisation will be the goal of the international conference I shall be hosting in Paris on 2-3 February next.

Ambassadors,

In 2007 it is my hope that the international community will find the wisdom and strength to come together.

France, keeping faith with the universal ideals of the French Revolution, strengthened by its tradition of independence, conscious of its responsibilities and of its European and international commitments, is in the front line in the fight for justice, human dignity and progress.

Such is the message I would ask you all to convey, with my warmest wishes of happiness and prosperity, to your governments and to your peoples.

Thank you.

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