



Report of the meeting between M. Jacques CHIRAC, President of the Republic, and M. Fouad SINIORA, Prime Minister of Lebanon

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President Chirac welcomed the Lebanese Prime Minister at a luncheon that he characterized as emblematic of the friendship between Lebanon and France. "Lebanon", said the President, "is a country with an ancient history; it has continued to exist despite all the difficulties and owes its existence to the exceptional qualities of the Lebanese people."

President Chirac welcomed the opportunity to prepare the Paris III Conference with Mr Siniora, the members of the Lebanese government in attendance, and the governor of the Central Bank of Lebanon, stating: "After the recent ordeals, I want to see a special effort made to help Lebanon overcome its difficulties."

President Chirac underscored the importance of the economic programme decided on by the Lebanese government, noting that the Paris Conference would send a message of hope and faith in the Lebanese economy's ability to recover and Lebanon's ability to rebuild.

President Chirac said "France [would] assist Lebanon in the form of a 500 million loan extended under very advantageous conditions. This highly significant contribution expresses the deep friendship, solidarity and trust between France and Lebanon and all the Lebanese."

President Chirac also expressed the wish that all countries and institutions in attendance demonstrate their faith in the Lebanese government's economic and social programme by making a significant contribution.

The President and the Prime Minister also discussed the domestic situation. President Chirac reiterated that he hoped that a spirit of unity and dialogue would prevail, ensuring respect for Lebanese institutions and the country's legitimate government, the result of democratic elections.

The discussion also touched upon the role of the international community's support for Lebanon. President Chirac expressed the hope that Lebanon would



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fully enjoy its sovereignty and would no longer be the victim of regional conflicts. He expressed the wish that all the countries of the region would respect its independence and sovereignty, in accordance with Security Council resolutions and international law, for "Lebanon's stability and prosperity contribute to the stability and prosperity of the region".

In conclusion, President Chirac noted that the Paris III Conference was particularly opportune and necessary because "the cost of inaction would be much higher than the commitment to Lebanon".

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