



## Spring European Council press conference given by M. Jacques CHIRAC, President of the Republic - excerpts -

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Brussels, 9 March 2007

THE PRESIDENT Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to begin by paying tribute to and thanking the presidency, which in every respect has excellently prepared and run a Council which, in my opinion, has been one of the great moments in Europe's history. It wasn't easy to manage and Mrs Merkel did so very skilfully and very elegantly. I express my gratitude to her.

### **ENERGY/CLIMATE CHANGE**

Why was this an important Council? Because it dealt with energy and climate problems. These are major issues something clearly felt by the public everywhere for the French, the Europeans and more generally for all the world's citizens. This Council succeeded in getting an extremely positive result allowing Europe to show that, first in the world, it is waking up to a major problem and providing solutions to it.

Why have I attached especial importance to it? Because it was largely on France's initiative that the European Council decided on the principle of a new European energy policy taking on board the climate issue.

We passed a milestone today with the adoption of an ambitious action plan, and you'll note, I hope, that this ambitious action plan takes up virtually all our proposals.

Europe is thus asserting its leadership in the battle against climate change by setting itself a unilateral objective of a 20% reduction in its greenhouse gases by 2020. In some cases, this pledge can be increased to 30%, in the framework of a post-Kyoto agreement committing other important countries in the world to undertake the same course of action and shoulder the same effort. It's a very strong signal.

At a time when the climate debate is, quite obviously, of increasing concern to people the world over, when this debate is starting to gain more substance in



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North America and China is beginning to realize the urgency of the ecological situation, the European initiative and example were particularly timely.

Europe is concretely embarking on the task of cutting its greenhouse gas emissions by a factor of four by 2050. This in fact means a veritable revolution in its energy use. Similarly, we are embarking on a major energy efficiency effort, with 20% of energy savings between now and 2020. The two objectives are of course consistent.

We are launching substantial investment in the development of low-carbon energies. France, the leading renewable energy producer in Europe, is supporting the binding objective the word was discussed and accepted by everyone of 20% of renewable energies and 10% of biofuels in 2020.

But renewable energies are only a part of the answer and won't be enough to achieve our climate objectives. All the studies, and particularly the Commission's, attest to this. It's why France insisted on the need to include renewable energies in the larger framework of low-carbon energies, including clean coal, which still requires some investment, and nuclear energy.

This is an important step. Make no mistake about it. It's on the same level as the developments which have taken place in the past few years with the creation of the euro and Defence Europe. Environmental Europe is also an extremely important step and one which I'm sure will impact on the life of our planet. Europe has shown that on infinitely complex and delicate issues it could unite and demonstrate a desire, a determination and could forge ahead, which nevertheless proves I say this to the professional sceptics, who, when it comes to Europe, exist all over the world that here there really is something rather remarkable which must be stressed and highlighted.

This was the essential reason for the importance I attached to this Council.

### **ROME TREATY/50th ANNIVERSARY**

Nevertheless, we also discussed other matters. Our discussions on the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, particularly at the Chancellor's initiative at yesterday evening's dinner, revealed a great meeting of minds. We shall moreover in a fortnight's time be together again with the Chancellor in Berlin. I reaffirmed my support for an ambitious declaration on 25 March, an ambitious declaration restating the vital importance of the European project, which is the guarantee of democracy, peace and prosperity for Europe. This must never be forgotten. People can always take a very narrow view of things, but Europe is in fact the condition for, the guarantee, fundamental guarantee of peace, democracy and stability.

An ambitious one too when it comes to the future and the major challenges of the modern world. I stressed the European project's humanist dimension, the cultural dimension of a Europe respecting identities and strong because of its diversity. Ambitious too as regards its social dimension, indissociable from



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its economic one, since Europe can hope to succeed in the globalized world only by ensuring social cohesion.

### **INSTITUTIONAL ISSUE**

On the institutional question, we are engaged in a sequence of actions running from the German presidency to the French presidency. A difficult sequence, but one we have to take on board responsibly. You know my position: the institutional reform is necessary for the proper functioning of the European system and for this we shall have to make a fresh start on the basis of the overall balance achieved in the institutional treaty, giving priority to the imperative of democracy and what was expressed by the French and then by the Dutch.

### **LISBON STRATEGY/EUROPEAN SOCIAL MODEL**

We also took stock of the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy. The reforms, particularly in France and Germany, are starting to bear fruit. In other areas too moreover. Growth is now solidly entrenched above 2% and unemployment is falling. We have just had the latest figures from INSEE [National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies], reducing the unemployment rate today from 8.6% to 8.5%. We must pursue these efforts in the face of tougher global competition. These necessary reforms have to be conducted with due regard for our European social model. This is how France obtained, for example, the guarantees we wanted on the financing of the universal postal service. You know the importance we attached to this problem.

### **MIDDLE EAST/MECCA AGREEMENT**

Finally, we discussed international issues and, in particular, the Middle East, looking at the decisions taken at the Mecca summit giving us grounds for hoping they will open up a path to achieving, little by little, an agreement and peace, and thus stability. We couldn't but approve the Mecca process.

### **LEBANON**

We also talked about the still difficult and dangerous situation in Lebanon and, particularly, the necessity for Lebanon to establish as soon as possible the international tribunal decided on by the UN, which will help act as a necessary deterrent to those who, in that region, are making assassination a normal tool of political management. This tribunal should allow all the Lebanese, regardless of their origin and faith, to come together to serve a free independent Lebanon respected by the countries surrounding her.

### **MODEL ENERGY STRATEGY**

That was what was done today. In conclusion, I'd simply like to say that this Council has achieved a major result with the adoption of a model energy strategy: model vis-à-vis the world, model vis-à-vis the challenge of climate



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warming. I'm really happy to underline the fact that France has already played an essential role on this for several months you could say two years which took concrete shape today despite a lot of pessimists having wondered whether it was possible to get all the Europeans to come together in support of the same objective. This was reflected today by a fundamental and model decision for the future of the world and its inhabitants.

### **PRESIDENT CHIRAC/EUROPEAN COUNCILS**

Q. Except for the Berlin meeting, this is perhaps your last Council. My question is not about whether you are going to stand; I'd like to have your assessment of the time you've spent at the European summits, councils over the past 12 years?

THE PRESIDENT Europe was a fantastic adventure and that wasn't obvious, particularly for the French, who are known to have a deep, traditional and historic commitment to their land, their history, their culture and their country. A firm belief in it had first to be created and then developed. This conviction has, little by little, been firmly rooted in hearts and minds. All the successive governments, regardless of their political origin, have of course participated and done so positively, which has enabled us to reach today's result.

You ask me about my contribution, in a way, to the achievements of the past ten or so years. Let me tell you that there are three issues which I feel really warranted my commitment.

The first was my determination at the time of the birth of the euro. It isn't certain that the euro would have become a reality had we not at the time taken the position we did a courageous position.

The second is defence. France I really initiated advances on defence. Since my first meetings with Tony Blair, we have significantly developed European defence. This is fundamental in every respect because it's something which is developing and explains, or justifies, a Europe which is united and is determined to ensure its security.

The third issue, to keep to what's essential, is ecology. It's a battle of growing concern to the French, since our fellow citizens are realizing the importance of preserving nature. And the events we're seeing, alas, today, particularly vis-à-vis the climate, are only increasing that fear, that justified fear of letting some people play god. Substance obviously had to be given to this environmental dimension in Europe, called upon to be a model in this sphere. This has been a battle which I've always fought, for a long time personally, and has come to fruition today. For me this is very satisfying.

(...)

### **SYRIA/US ANTI-MISSILE SHIELD**



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Q. Do you think Mr Solana's visit to Syria is a good idea, and that Europe and the United States must do even more to reassure Russia on the anti-missile shield project in Poland and the Czech Republic?

THE PRESIDENT First of all, I unreservedly approve incidentally I had a very long talk with him yesterday evening and today Mr Solana's initiative which is in fact a European Union initiative. Mr Solana is setting out with a clear, considered message on which there is a general consensus. So I totally approve of it. What I did express reservations about was the fact that some ministers were going it alone, engaging in discussions on a subject which requires complete consistency of European Union action. Moreover whenever they did so there were negative results, which were always picked up, particularly by the press. So we have decided that Europe would speak with a single voice, that this voice would be Mr Solana's he has the requisite expertise and consults everyone before adopting positions. He's going to make a round of visits starting by meeting the Lebanese Prime Minister, then the King of Saudi Arabia and then the Syrian President. So I can but approve this initiative and I have every confidence in Mr Solana who, I repeat, is setting out with a European roadmap.

You also mention the decision taken to strengthen US defence systems in Eastern Europe. What I can tell you is that we must be very careful, as regards this project, not to encourage the creation of new dividing lines in Europe or the return to an obsolete order. To my mind this project raises many questions to which thought will have to be given before responding. (●●).

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