



Speech by Jacques Chirac, President of the French Republic, on the occasion of the first meeting of the Forum for the Partnership with Africa - Paris, 10 November 2003

President,
Secretary General,
Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be able to meet with you, as you begin your meeting, to tell you about the hopes France places in this Forum for the Partnership with Africa.

Globalisation cannot succeed without African development. And the development of Africa demands that all of us, Africans and donors alike, unite as partners in our efforts. In Genoa, Monterrey, Kananaskis, and Evian, the spirit of partnership has taken shape around a twofold commitment, namely the commitment by the countries of Africa to pursue ambitious, resolute development policies; and the commitment by the international community to provide them with political and financial support on a scale to match the challenge.

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Our meeting takes place at one of those privileged moments in time when previously scattered efforts crystallize. The countries of Africa, those of the OECD, and the international organisations now share a common ambition and a common compass.

We have set our course, namely to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. They concern Africa, the most deprived of the continents, first and foremost, and they are the bedrock of our contract.

To follow this course, we have chosen common terms of reference in the form of the NEPAD, which was set up by the Africans themselves, and a method, partnership, in place of assistance.

Partnership is an exacting discipline. It is based on trust, reciprocal undertakings given in good faith, respect for others, for their history, their traditions and their vision. It calls for frank speaking. The impending launch of the African peer review mechanism is an encouraging sign in that regard. In the same spirit, an African expert is to take part in the OECD's review of France's international cooperation policy.

This partnership will become fully meaningful as it opens up totally to civil society, to associations, business enterprises, trade unions and communities, and to international and regional organisations. These ties, which are as much personal as institutional, will be the lifeblood of our relationship.

Our partnership is becoming organised. Already the Africa Action Plan adopted at Kananaskis and confirmed at Evian has spurred progress on several fronts. It



has led to the creation of your Forum, which is open to all the major donors. I want to hail the "0.7% Club" especially those countries that set an example by spending more than 0.7% of their GDP to development aid. France wants to figure among them by 2012. The Forum is not a substitute for dialogue between the G8 and NEPAD. It supplements it and gives to its principles a universal foundation. It sets it up on lasting foundations, for the development of Africa calls for the mobilization of all for the long haul.

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There are huge obstacles along our road. I know them, and I do not underestimate them.

War, to begin with, which is raging in many countries. Coups d'État, of which there are still too many. There is the gangrene of corruption and bad governance, with its inevitable and unacceptable violations of human rights. HIV/AIDS, which continues to wreak its havoc. Extreme poverty continues to afflict one African in two, and is on the increase. There are still shortages and famine. More or less everywhere, looting of natural resources is mutilating the continent and threatens some of the gems of our world heritage.

I can hear the sceptics murmuring as they gloat over these difficulties, and it brings to mind that proverb, said to be African: "Thinking about the obstacle is the road to failure; focusing on the goal is the road to success." That is how the NEPAD goes about things, and I want to pay tribute to that approach.

Conscious of what is not working, it is seeking to break out of the vicious circle of impotence and lack of motivation.

What I have seen in the course of my frequent trips to Africa, and just the other day again in Niger and Mali, absolutely refutes the idea that development is fated to fail in this continent. It is now up to us to recognize and nurture the positive trends taking shape there.

Peace is gaining ground. That is true in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in Sudan, Burundi, Angola, and perhaps also in Liberia and Sierra Leone, to cite just a handful of examples. These processes are still fragile and we must consolidate them. Building peace should continue to be the priority in our dialogue, around three major themes. First, working with the United Nations, the African Union and the G8, to develop regional peacekeeping arrangements. Second, to focus our efforts on the special case of post-crisis or post-conflict countries. And, lastly, to draw the initial lessons from the interventions in Ituri, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Progress is being made in the fight against bad governance and corruption. A growing number of countries are treating this battle as a priority. They are right, and they must persevere. The countries in the franc area are working together on this. Peer review will act as a powerful stimulus, and your Forum should discuss calmly and frankly the policies being pursued and their results.

The OECD's support is welcome in this respect. I also attach importance to the initiative on payments transparency endorsed by the G8. It deserves your attention and support.

Progress is also being made in the fight against HIV/AIDS and the major pandemics. Practice and attitudes are changing. HIV/AIDS is no longer seen as something to be ashamed of or a curse, but is now well and truly recognized as a scourge that threatens the development of the entire continent. The Global Fund has received additional financing. France, which contributes 150 million



euros annually to it, considers that it ought to receive 3 billion dollars a year, in equal shares from the United States, the European Union and the rest of the world. The Forum could monitor the work of the Fund in Africa and help the countries of Africa to frame effective strategies against pandemics.

Human development is making progress too. Since the Dakar Forum, the countries of Africa have mobilized to promote education for all, and many have embarked on the Fast Track Initiative proposed by the World Bank. The reaction of the international community this year to the risks of famine in Southern Africa and in the heart of Africa is another harbinger of hope. It naturally decided to send emergency aid. It has also acknowledged that agricultural development is lagging, and the need to remedy this. For water, an essential yet relatively neglected sector, the G8 adopted an ambitious Action Plan in Evian, and the World Bank is about to mobilize on this issue.

The Niamey Declaration adopted two months ago opens up new perspectives in the same spirit for the River Niger and sustainable development of its basin.

And, finally, economic progress. If Africa is to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, it needs to grow by around 7% a year. That presupposes resolute policies to attract private investment and savings, both local and foreign, to stimulate that entrepreneurship, which, as we know, drives the peoples of Africa. It is a high growth goal, but, as the latest UNDP Human Development Report reminds us, some countries have "achieved impressive progress [•••]. In Cape Verde, Mauritius, Mozambique and Uganda per capita income grew by more than 3% a year, and Ghana and Mozambique achieved some of the world's sharpest reductions in hunger." Other countries, from Senegal to Egypt and Botswana, are close to achieving comparable results. Your Forum could serve as a prime focus in helping the countries of Africa to devise and implement policies offering incentives to private initiative and support to businesses, and for benefiting from successful experiences in other countries. More private money, to be sure, but more public money too, in particular to fund indispensable infrastructures. In keeping with Monterrey pledges, Official Development Assistance has begun growing once more. France is playing its role to the full in that regard. We also need to find new sources of funding. France supports the idea of an International Finance Facility put forward by the United Kingdom. In addition, I would like us to ponder a levy on the wealth generated by globalization. I have formed an international task force to work on this question, which will report to me before the next G8 summit.

Lastly, growth depends on bringing Africa back into the world trade system. In the aftermath of Cancun, I suggest that your Forum look anew at the proposals put forward by France and Europe, namely a moratorium on agricultural subsidies to avoid destabilizing local producers; harmonizing preferences in order to promote access to Northern markets; and reopening the question of commodities, with a view to greater predictability. This initiative remains on the table because it answers Africa's needs. I also want to confirm, as I did in Mali and Niger, that France supports the cotton producing countries and hopes for a rapid solution to their problems. More than 15 million small farmers depend on our ability to come up with solutions.

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

You embody a new way of looking at Africa, a new hope for Africa. As the



PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

representative of a Head of State, a Head of Government or an international institution, each of you derives your legitimacy from this personal link. Your strength lies in your capacity to provide a political impetus. You will get people to listen to you not by creating new institutions but by proposing, as a result of your discussions, solutions capable of changing the situation on the ground.

Though unjustly marginalized, the continent of Africa has an indispensable part to play in the process of globalization. Without its wisdom, its cultures, its rhythms, its energy, and its sense of solidarity and fraternity, ours would be a mutilated world. That is something I cannot countenance, any more than you could. Like you, I have faith in Africa and its development. History has taken a heavy toll on this magnificent continent, and it faces colossal difficulties. But it is rich, by virtue of its people, its cultures, and its natural resources. And its peoples and leaders are determined to move forward. Thank you.

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