



## **NATO Summit - Press briefing given by M. Jacques CHIRAC, President of the Republic, following the Summit - excerpts (Istanbul)**

(Istanbul, 29 June 2004)

### **NATO-UKRAINE DISTINCTIVE PARTNERSHIP/NATO-RUSSIA COUNCIL**

THE PRESIDENT (...) This morning we had the NATO-Ukraine summit. Yesterday, we had, at foreign minister level, the NATO-Russia summit. This morning, the NATO-Ukraine summit, in the presence of President Kuchma, gave all the participants the opportunity to underline the importance of our relations with Ukraine and express our very strong hope that the process of entrenching democracy will be confirmed, particularly in the forthcoming presidential elections. (...)

### **EAPC/AFGHANISTAN/ISAF/EUROCORPS**

We then had the meeting of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council [EAPC]. As you know, there are now 26 of us in NATO and 46 in the Partnership Council, with a number of countries, particularly from Central Asia and the Caucasus, and some others. It gave us the opportunity, first of all, to exchange a number of points of view, but also, and this was important and interesting, to hear a very interesting statement from President Karzai who talked to us about the situation in Afghanistan on the eve of the elections (...). France is concerned, and even very concerned since, as you know, we are, through Eurocorps, going to take command of ISAF, liaising extremely closely with our German friends.

We listened intently to President Karzai who told us of his hopes. The economic development there is indisputable, and Afghanistan is achieving, having of course started from a very low level, outstanding growth rates. But he also told us of his worries which we all share the [disruption] somewhat reminiscent of the terrorism of the Taliban, the ploys of the warlords, and the problem, which I think is becoming increasingly grave for this region and the world, of the production of drugs, which is today higher than at any time in the past and is really a problem we must take very, very seriously because of its consequences. Even going beyond its consequences for public health, everyone understands that this is the source of colossal sums of money which subsequently finance terrorism in many places around the world.

### **AFGHAN ELECTIONS/NATO**

Above all, President Karzai made a point of expressing his thanks to the community he was addressing for what had been done for his country, for its



development and its security. In particular, he stressed his anxiety in the run-up to the elections, asking us to be very vigilant and put in place the necessary resources so that the elections can take place in a sufficiently secure environment for Afghan citizens.

We confirmed to him the decisions we took yesterday, i.e. not to mobilize, as some had thought, NATO's Rapid Response Force, since it isn't designed for that and we mustn't use things for the wrong purpose or for just anything. As a rule, that's the best way to ensure the failure of the reforms.

There was, if more troops were needed, the existing force generation process. This could very well be implemented, nevertheless, vigilance was needed. Consequently, yesterday it was a French proposal which was finally adopted: we decided, on the one hand, to put the NRF forces on maximum alert, in case an urgent relief operation were subsequently justified, and, on the other, immediately to send a fact-finding mission to Afghanistan. President Karzai was good enough to tell us that he totally agreed with this solution and, following these decisions, expressed feelings of great gratitude to all the NATO members, and let me say especially France.

(...)

#### GEORGIA/AZERBAIJAN/SERBIA

Finally, I had some private discussions with, among others, the dynamic President of Georgia, who is in the process of restoring calm, security and the conditions for development in his country. I also had talks with President Aliyev who is, as you know, President of Azerbaijan and recently came to Paris, and we were able to take stock of developments. I had a meeting with the Prime Minister and Defence Minister of President Tadic of Serbia, who asked to see me to thank France for what she did during the elections in Serbia. I told them that we had no intention of interfering in the slightest way in Serbian affairs, but that we particularly welcomed the results. I asked them to convey to President Tadic my genuinely cordial congratulations and I'm not using the word "cordial" in the diplomatic sense and an invitation to Paris.(...)

#### FRANCE/PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES/PRESIDENT ARAFAT/ISRAEL

Q. The Foreign Minister, M. Barnier, is today leaving for the Palestinian Territories. Following the recent statements and Israel's decision to evacuate the Gaza Strip, I'd like to ask you if we can expect a French presence in the framework of a European or international presence, a military presence, perhaps, to ensure peace in the Gaza Strip? Second question concerning the minister's visit: it seems that Israel isn't happy about M. Barnier going to see Yasser Arafat and that his visit to Israel has been postponed until the autumn, have you any comment on this?

THE PRESIDENT M. Michel Barnier is taking off at this very moment on his way to Ramallah and this is why he isn't here. He's going to land in Tel Aviv and



## PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

then go to Ramallah where tomorrow he will be having talks with President Arafat.

I'd like first to restate France's position which is also the European Union's. President Arafat is the elected legitimate president of the Palestinian people and, consequently, he's our normal interlocutor. And so it is legitimate to have contacts with him. This is what M. Barnier is doing and he will also, it's scheduled for early autumn I believe, have a long and in-depth visit to Israel. (...)

You know my firm belief, I have been expressing it for a very long time: you can have any opinion you want of President Arafat, as of any other president in the world, but you can't dispute the legitimacy [of a legitimate president] so long as it hasn't been superseded by a different legitimacy. Secondly, I still feel, as I have for a long time, that today President Arafat is probably the only person capable of imposing on the Palestinian people compromises, particularly of a territorial nature, which could not be imposed, today at any rate, by anyone else. This is why I believe that wanting to isolate him isn't very prudent or very much in line with a strategy of restoring peace.

As far as the international presence is concerned, France has always said that, in the framework of a peace settlement in line with the spirit of the Roadmap and so a negotiated one, she was willing, wholly ready to look at any proposals made for an international civilian or military presence in the region.

(...)

### FRANCE/US/IRAQ

Q. Haven't you had enough of the dialogue of the deaf which seems to have been established between you and President Bush, and even possibly with Tony Blair, on NATO's role in Iraq and on other issues?

THE PRESIDENT I've never quite understood what a dialogue of the deaf was, because I've never seen one take place. (...) On the contrary, there is a dialogue between all of us in general and between President Bush and me, in particular, which is the complete opposite of a dialogue of the deaf.

First of all, this dialogue is driven by a deep-rooted respect and friendship which our two peoples feel for each other and can't possibly change depending on developments, or specific crises or criticisms of the moment in the management of day-to-day affairs. I repeat there's longstanding mutual respect and gratitude, which doesn't change. It is driven not only by history, but also by the fact that we share a number of values. (...)

Secondly, there have been differences of views. We are friends, allies, we aren't servants, of course, and when we don't agree, we say so. We don't do it aggressively, as you'll have noted, but we do it firmly. That's been the case for everything to do with the American strategy vis-à-vis Iraq, we adopted a



position which wasn't the same as theirs and we stuck to it. We don't today have the feeling of having been profoundly mistaken. (...).

Now today things have obviously moved on and this dialogue has, quite definitely, drawn us significantly closer together. This isn't because we have changed our approaches and proposals have always been moderate, but because (...) at the Security Council and during the drafting of UNSCR 1546, President Bush clearly demonstrated a greater, far greater openness of mind than some might have feared, or had been the case in the past. Thanks to this openness of mind, we have not had a dialogue of the deaf, but, on the contrary, an effective dialogue, allowing us to reach an agreement which was perfectly in line with what we considered essential. Similarly, we have pursued this dialogue extremely cordially during this summit.

Q. That's three times that you've had tête-à-tête meetings with President Bush, since at this summit you met him only in the official sessions. We haven't noted any particular warmth, apart from the exchanges on the quality of French cuisine at Sea Island. We know the excellent relations you had with his father and his predecessor. Is the policy George Bush is conducting affecting the quality of your personal relationship?

THE PRESIDENT I can tell you very frankly: no. And in any case it doesn't affect, and can't under any circumstances affect, the nature of the relations between the two governments and two countries, and a fortiori those between the two peoples.

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