

MESSAGE FROM MR JACQUES CHIRAC  
PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC  
AT THE OPENING OF THE MINISTERIAL FORUM ON FINANCING FOR  
DEVELOPMENT

PARIS, 8 APRIL 2004

Ladies and gentlemen,

You have gathered here to promote solidarity between nations. This is one of the most pressing needs of our time. I stand by you in this endeavour.

This is an ethical cause. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims equal dignity for all. As exchanges between peoples increase, that Declaration must inspire a sustained effort to compensate for the disadvantages suffered by the poorest. An open world that leaves hundreds of millions of men and women without a future would betray our ideals. It is something we cannot accept. We must take action.

Building solidarity between nations is also, of course, in all our interest. The world economy benefits from the emergence of new, dynamic and prosperous markets, with their potential for innovation and their need for facilities. In contrast, rampant poverty acts like a millstone, impeding growth.

Building solidarity between nations is, finally, a question of security. Sustained economic growth helps us to tackle modern-day scourges such as international networks of organised crime, drug trafficking or terrorism far more effectively. By spreading hope, it also helps to ease resentment, frustration and humiliation.

In 2002, in Monterrey, we succeeded in uniting to form a coalition for solidarity. By establishing this partnership for development, the international community spoke the language of trust and commitment. There are no longer the powers that lay down the law and give assistance on one side, and the countries that receive and obey on the other. There are now partners, united in working towards a common goal. Under the terms of the Monterrey Consensus, any country that implements balanced and

sustained growth policies must be able to access the resources required to finance its efforts. That is the spirit of the NEPAD initiative, which holds such promise for Africa.

Much progress has been made over the last two years. There has, in particular, been a substantial increase in Official Development Assistance, and France plays a full part in this.

However, everyone knows that the progress made so far is not enough. At the present rate, by 2015 we will not have achieved the Millennium Development Goals that we set ourselves in New York, in September 2000, at the dawn of the new century.

We are committed to these goals. North and South together, we shall all be accountable to future generations for our success or failure.

The conditions for meeting these targets were established by experts from international institutions. Bringing about the critical change that enables a poor country to escape poverty, establish itself in international markets and accelerate its growth rate to a pace that clearly outstrips population growth, and giving it the means to implement the educational, social and health policies that are vital to meet the basic needs of its population, requires a very strong impetus. Clearly, that impetus comes first and foremost from the States themselves. But there is no doubt that international assistance is also required.

So, when Tony Blair put forward the idea of an International Finance Facility aimed at raising, during the period of its existence, the extra \$50 billion needed each year to achieve the Millennium Goals, I immediately gave it my approval. I am delighted that the United Kingdom and France are working together to achieve this initiative, a project that Gordon Brown has initiated with such skill.

This proposal can move things forward.

It is a pragmatic solution; one that proposes a simple and effective way of meeting an urgent need by borrowing on international markets to raise a loan guaranteed by the rich countries.

It is a generous solution, since it calls for the loan to be repaid not by the recipient countries, but by the borrowers, as part of their Official Development Assistance.

It is an economically rational solution, since, in true orthodox fashion, it involves financing investment through borrowing. And investment is really what this is all about, as the funds will be allocated to economic development.

I am fully aware of the difficulties that could impede the implementation of such a programme and the many questions it raises: how it will develop in the long term, for instance, and how to ensure that the funds raised are used effectively and democratically. These are all matters that you will freely discuss today; but you will also reflect on whether there are any other credible solutions for freeing the world from the suffering caused by poverty and for opening up a route to shared prosperity.

We also need to think about how the wealth now being generated by globalisation could be mobilised more effectively to provide the international community with sufficient and, above all, stable resources to cover basic needs: education for all, access to safe water and sanitation, the fight against AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, security of the food supply and the prevention of and recovery from ecological disasters.

This quest for an international taxation system to benefit sustainable development fits in very neatly with the approach proposed by the United Kingdom. It must be undertaken objectively, in the same pragmatic spirit and with imagination. Once again, I am fully aware of the difficulties that will have to be overcome, primarily the very natural reluctance to broach taxation. We cannot, however, maintain the accelerated pace of economic globalisation without, at the same time, setting up global compensatory mechanisms similar to those we have had so much difficulty establishing at national level over the last 200 years.

I have formed a high-level group that has been given the task of independently considering this issue – one that I believe is critical for international solidarity. It will submit its preliminary conclusions to me in May and will benefit from your discussions.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The success of globalisation depends on bridging old divides. The divide between sovereignty and supranationality, which must give way to the idea of shared responsibility. The divide between North and South, so harmful at a time when we need to build a common future. The divide between private and public, which hails from another era. The divide between civil society and State, unproductive at a time when we need to establish a global democracy.

I warmly welcome you to Paris and hope that your work, carried out in the name of human progress and humanitarian duty, will contribute to establishing the new prospects we so badly need.

Thank you.