



EMBARGO UNTIL DELIVERY

**SPEECH BY NICOLAS SARKOZY,
PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC,
AT THE OPENING OF
THE SIXTEENTH AMBASSADORS' CONFERENCE
Paris – 27 August 2008**

Prime Minister,
Mr. Speaker of the Senate,
Mr. Speaker of the National Assembly,
Mr. Minister of Foreign and European Affairs,
Ministers,
Members of Parliament,
Ambassadors,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ten days ago, 10 French soldiers fell in Afghanistan during fighting with Taliban terrorists. They fell in the service of a just cause, as part of a mission approved by the United Nations: the fight against terrorism, the fight for our values, for freedom and for human rights in a country that has been battered by obscurantist barbarism. Let us remember the stonings in stadiums, the mutilations, the flouting of women's rights. Our soldiers fell to protect France, to protect the French from the direct threat of terrorism, whose source lies largely in that part of the world. That is what is at stake in Afghanistan.

A year ago, I told you right here that one of the main challenges of the years to come would be to avoid a confrontation between Islam and the West. A confrontation that these extremists, who reject any opening, any kind of modernity, any kind of diversity, would like to provoke. I told you that it was our duty to help and encourage the forces of moderation and modernity in Afghanistan. That is what we have done and that is what we will continue to do.

Our military presence, decided on understandably in 2001, has been strengthened. Together with its European allies—25 of the 27 members of the EU—as well as Americans, Canadians and Turks, France is doing its utmost to stabilize that country and to prevent a regime allied with al-Qaeda from returning to power. We decided to strengthen our presence as part of the new allied strategy defined at France's behest at the Bucharest Summit. It remains valid, entailing a lasting commitment, a comprehensive civilian and military approach with increased coordination of aid, the necessary cooperation of Pakistan, and especially the progressive takeover of Afghan security responsibilities by the Afghans themselves. That is the top objective, in my view, because it is the prerequisite for lasting success. In central Afghanistan, in the Kabul region, it is France that since August has been in charge of organizing this transfer of responsibility to the Afghan army within a maximum period of one year. Tomorrow, August 28, it will be entrusted with the security of the city of Kabul.



Some say it would be better to emphasize reconstruction. That is what I have done: Our civilian aid has been doubled. Last June, our country hosted a conference in support of Afghanistan that was a remarkable success, collecting some \$20 billion in aid for the coming years.

Of course the situation remains difficult and dangerous. But let us measure the progress that has been achieved: democratic institutions with new elections in 2009/2010; nearly 6 million children attending school, compared with 800,000 in 2001; a health-care system that has reduced infant mortality by a quarter, saving the lives of 40,000 children each year; unprecedented progress in the equality of men and women in every arena; restored infrastructures; 4,000 kilometers of roads constructed.... Who could possibly believe that all this would have been possible without our military presence?

What alternative is there? A military retreat would be followed by the return of the Taliban and al-Qaeda, and probably the destabilization of neighboring Pakistan. That is inconceivable. Let us be clear: France, a permanent member of the Security Council, will assume its responsibilities. It will not give in to terrorists. It will fight them wherever they may be found, holding the firm belief that the Afghan people will progressively be able to face them on its own, and that, with its allies, it will triumph over barbarism.

Ambassadors,

Since our first meeting exactly one year ago today, the world has experienced several major changes that mark, to a certain degree, the advent of a new era.

The breaks with the past that I had proposed to the French, and which have been implemented over the past 15 months, have been validated, as if that were necessary. In a world where everything is changing at an accelerated pace, France must change deeply and quickly if it wants to remain among the leaders, among the nations that make History rather than submit to it.

In France itself, the ongoing process of reform will continue in every arena and at the same pace. My determination, and that of the government, is total. We simply do not have the choice, and the French have understood this. So has the world, noting that France is on the move, that it rejects the heralded decline and is demonstrating its ability to transform.

France's repositioning on the world stage was conducted with equal determination, despite occasional questions. Fifteen months have given us sufficient perspective to judge the effects of these foreign policy shifts, which I had announced during the election campaign. I would like to give you my initial assessment of five major areas.

Our first break with the past was in our relations with the United States and the Atlantic Alliance.

I wanted to situate France openly and clearly within the Western family, to restore our relationship of trust with the American people and its leaders, and to renew our relationship with the Atlantic Alliance. Why?

During the decades when there were two great superpowers, and for the 10 years that there was a single superpower, it was correct and desirable for our country to mark its difference with respect to Washington. But a few years ago, we entered a radically different period that will persist for several decades and that I would characterize as an "era of relative powers." Not that the United States has lost its formidable strengths, but the meteoric rise of China, India and Brazil and the return of Russia are creating a new situation. No country is in a position to impose its vision of things on its own; objective conditions exist for a new entente between great powers but it remains to be organized. Just as it remains to invent the new international order the world needs in order to deal with global problems.



During this transition period, when familiar landmarks are becoming harder to discern, I thought I should clearly state where France stands and which values and interests are essential to us.

I've noticed that no longer is anyone saying or writing that by choosing this path, France has given up its independence or lost its sovereignty. But some remain worried: Might France lose some of its room to maneuver or see its image undermined throughout the world?

I am convinced of the opposite. France, it seems to me, has gained credibility. It has given itself more room to act and increased its ability to wield influence both inside and outside of its family.

The NATO Summit in Bucharest last April offered a perfect example of this: For the first time since the creation of the Alliance, the President of the United States offered clear public support for the European defense project. He did so because he was convinced that France did not wish to weaken the Atlantic Alliance through this project, that the two were complementary rather than antagonistic. The Polish authorities and other reputed "Atlanticists" expressed their support for our approach for the same reason.

Our second break with the past was respect to our position in the Mideast.

How many times have I heard people voice a fear that I could sum up as follows: "If you express France's friendship for Israel too clearly, we will lose our special relationship with the Arab world."

I have always been convinced that the opposite was true. For me, restoring a strong and lasting relationship of trust with Israel's leaders and with the Israeli people was a natural step, and the necessary condition for increasing France's influence in the Mideast. First, because you can't contribute to peace if you don't have the trust of the two concerned parties. And second, because you can say many things when you're received as a friend.

The speech I delivered at the Knesset contained several messages that were hard to hear for a large part of the members of Parliament and for the Israeli people. Yet it was warmly received among both Israelis and Palestinians and throughout the Arab world.

A week before France was to assume its Presidency of the European Union, at a time when we were preparing to return to the Quartet, it was important for our country to express its message clearly and forcefully, a message that is the same for both parties: a message of friendship, of commitment and of truth concerning the conditions for peace.

Another major change is our relations with Syria.

A year ago, I asserted the importance of reconciliation with all those who were ready to change. We began with Libya and we continued with Syria.

There too, what didn't I hear! According to some (including some in Washington, let it be said in passing), the only diplomatic option available was that country's isolation. I preferred to take a different path, a more risky one, it's true, but also more promising: that of a clear dialogue leading to tangible progress. It was not easy, and the lack of progress led me to suspend further dialogue on December 30 until the development occurred that we and the Arab league had been waiting for: the election, in Lebanon, of President Suleiman.

My talks with President Bashar al-Assad on July 12 in Paris led to progress on two new fronts: the solemn announcement of the establishment of diplomatic relations, for the first time in history, between Beirut and Damascus; and Syria's decision to see France co-sponsor with the United States direct Syrian-Israeli negotiations, when the time comes, on issues such as the implementation of the ensuing peace agreement, including security arrangements.



Here too, restoring trustful relations with the other partner in peace, Israel, as with the United States, played a major role. It's also because Syria knows that we now have excellent relations with those two countries that Damascus wanted France to shoulder this unprecedented responsibility in due time. I will be traveling to Syria on September 3 and 4 to continue this productive dialogue on these and other issues.

My hope is that in a not-too-distant future, Lebanon and Israel will in turn engage in indirect discussions and that France will be able to contribute to their success, at the request of both parties.

But the most striking validation of the new course our Mideast policy is taking came at the Union for the Mediterranean summit on July 13-14. Only a single leader, President Mahmoud Abbas, had agreed to make the trip for the 10th anniversary of the Barcelona Process. In Paris every Arab country invited except for one was represented by a head of state or government. And all of them stood around the same round table with the Prime Minister of Israel and the European leaders—it was an unprecedented sight. This major project is now a reality and France, together with the Egyptian co-president, will do its utmost to ensure that the four ministerial meetings taking place this fall lead to the swift implementation of the six ambitious projects adopted on July 13.

Our third break with the past involved the European Union. There has been much talk about French-German tensions, notably over the Union for the Mediterranean project. It is not unusual, on major issues, for our two countries' positions to be different at the start. The important thing is for us to have the will to reach a good compromise. That is what we have done, on this issue as on many others, and after taking a little bit of time to get back up to speed, the French-German understanding—which remains crucial—is stronger than ever.

But the break is actually somewhere else. When I assumed my duties, France was on Europe's back bench, partly but not entirely as a result of the 2005 referendum. Our country was still playing the European game in a way that perhaps had its merits 20 years ago, but was out of sync with the realities of today's Europe.

I wanted to establish straightaway a close, confident cooperation with the Commission and its remarkable President, and with the European Parliament, its President, and the leaders of the parliamentary groups whom I received individually at the Elysée, an unprecedented move.

In the same spirit, I initiated a systematic dialogue with all of our partners. I am thinking in particular of the United Kingdom, which, I am convinced, has an essential role to play in modernizing our Europe. I am thinking too of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, with whom our relations had grown more distant even though many of them share our vision of a more political, more activist Europe. For in a Europe of 27, each country must be able to make its voice heard, must feel listened to and respected. That is the precondition for any agreement, and it is how we achieved the signature of the Lisbon Treaty. It was in this same spirit of attentive listening that I went to Dublin in July.

Here, in your presence, I would like to thank François Fillon, Bernard Kouchner, Jean-Pierre Jouyet, all the Parisian officials and all the concerned Ambassadors. They prepared the French Presidency methodically and ambitiously, but especially with that willingness to listen and to dialogue without which success is impossible. Today France is once again at the heart of the European game, and we are playing as a team!

Our fourth break with the past concerns Africa.

First, there is a process that I object to, that of so-called "*Françafrique*," if it jeopardizes the ties that France—unlike the United Kingdom, Portugal and Spain—successfully maintained with its former colonies after independence. It is to France's credit that we successfully provided these nations, at their request, with massive and various aid packages. France is a faithful friend. It accepts the ties woven by History without complexes.



At the same time, we must recognize a real problem of perception, notably among the younger generations who are the continent's future. The study that our ambassadors in Africa conducted at my request, and for which I thank them, offered an unretouched view of a France seen to exploit for its sole profit the continent's resources through entrenched networks.

Economic realities totally contradict these perceptions, and I ask you to help those realities become better known and understood. But in politics, perceptions are important. We must take account of them and correct those that may be the source of misunderstandings. That was the whole meaning of the speech I delivered before the South African Parliament in Cape Town last February 28, underscoring the urgent need to modernize our development aid instruments in order to support the private sector on a priority basis; marking our resolve to establish solid partnerships with South Africa, Angola and Nigeria without neglecting our old friends; and affirming the importance of our relationship with a continent whose peace, development and prosperity, as well as its failures, will also be ours in Europe.

But I want to go beyond words and shore up this new African policy through actions: those being, after discussions with our concerned partners, the systematic revision of our defense agreements and the reduction of our military bases. They must be adapted to our current vocation, which is the training of regional African peacekeeping units in strict respect of our commitments, without intervening in domestic conflicts as we demonstrated this past February in Chad. It means cooperation with the UN, the African Union and sub-regional organizations for conflict resolution, defense and the promotion of principles that the Africans themselves have adopted: the rejection of coups d'Etat, the affirmation of democracy and human rights. Our recent role in Mauritania offers a perfect illustration of this.

Our fifth and final break with the past relates to human rights. I had said this would be a foreign policy priority for us. It is indeed a priority, a concern at every moment.

And yet, what haven't I heard! I respect and support those who are engaged on the ground and who, through their words, through their testimony, play an irreplaceable role, alerting us to abuses and exerting pressure. I ask them simply to understand that a head of state or a foreign minister is in a different situation, employing ways of action that, while different, are no less respectable.

Bernard Kouchner and I decided that France should be much more engaged in finding a solution to Darfur, which is certainly the worst tragedy the world is facing today. Thus the Paris conference in June of last year; thus the efforts under way to pick up the threads of a dialogue without which there will be no lasting political solution; thus the deployment, at our behest, of the European force on Chad's border to protect hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced persons. What's at stake is the stability of the entire region. What's at stake are the lives of millions of human beings.

Wherever French troops are deployed, in operations ranging from Afghanistan to Côte d'Ivoire, from Lebanon to Kosovo, it is to promote peace, democracy and freedom.

On this essential question of human rights, there remains a difficult debate concerning the conditions for effective action. Here I would like to share with you my inner thoughts on two countries—Russia and China—as an example. All accounts confirm that the citizens of those two countries largely support their leaders. Not that they are unaware of the progress that remains to be made with respect to freedoms and democracy. But because they consider that what has been achieved in terms of economic and human development is remarkable and has restored their national pride.

Does that mean we should refrain from talking to them about human rights or give up their universality? Of course not! When I traveled to Moscow on August 12 to obtain a halt to the fighting in Georgia, wasn't the fate of tens of thousands of men, women and children hanging in the balance? And I believe I am the first French president to have publicly affirmed our positions on the death penalty and press freedoms before my Chinese counterpart, at a press conference. But we must approach these difficult subjects, and notably that of minorities, in a way that leads to tangible,



positive results, not to a sterile confrontation. Let's not forget that it is also with these two countries that we are dealing with such weighty problems as Darfur and Afghanistan, Iran and the global economy.

There is a path. I will continue to follow it, concerned only with achieving results, but without creating lasting antagonisms that would serve no cause, and certainly not that of human rights.

And for me, a life is a life. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to contribute to the release of the Bulgarian nurses through negotiations with Colonel Khadafi, and that of Ingrid Betancourt and several Colombian hostages by speaking not just with President Uribe but also with President Chavez. And I will continue to fight until we gain the release of the soldier Gilad Shalit. I have been asked on occasion why I should fight so fiercely to obtain these hostage releases. Well, simply because it's a matter of human rights! My duty as President and as a human being was and remains to spare no effort to extract them from such hells.

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Ambassadors,

As I said before, this past year marked the advent of a new era. Allow me to return to this point and to tell you why.

The analysis I shared with you last year concerning globalization and the main challenges facing France remains valid.

And yet three factors have combined to put everything in a different light.

The first factor that marked this past year is of course the financial crisis that began with the subprime scandal, the grave—but still unpunished—mistakes of rating agencies, and more generally, the excesses of a financial capitalism that has gotten seriously off track. That includes the dissimulation of risks, unverified and highly complicated financial instruments, legal loopholes and the persistence of tax havens attracting a share of world savings that would be more justly used to finance investments and growth. According to the IMF, these terrible lapses will cost the international banking system about a trillion dollars in the long-term. But the cost to the real economy will be even higher.

While the main epicenters of previous financial crises were the emerging countries, it is now the very heart of world capitalism that is being hit, with the prospect, if we do nothing, of a permanent disconnect between the growth of OECD countries and that of emerging countries, which for the time being have been less sharply affected. That is why we must first continue to do everything we can at the EU level to promote the growth of the European economy. Reestablishing confidence requires the consolidation of the European financial sector and a resolute effort to strengthen transparency, responsibility and oversight. Thus the EU will make the most effective contribution to the effort that must be pursued more broadly with its partners to correct the shortcomings and deficiencies of the international financial system.

The second factor that has changed the situation over the past year is the skyrocketing prices of raw materials, which are overall at their highest level since World War II. The reasons for this are many and well known. I will not enumerate them here. What counts is to be able to measure the consequences of this deep shock, beyond its recessive effect on the world economy. And especially to determine the actions to take to correct these effects.

I want to talk first of all about agricultural products. It is shocking to realize that the world was taken by surprise by what all these statistical data heralded. At a time when we have to feed an additional 50 million people each year, at a time when emerging countries are rapidly changing their eating habits,



world production has not followed suit. With the increased cost of inputs, skyrocketing prices became a certainty. We have seen the results: Some 30 countries from Haiti to Guinea have seen food riots.

During the FAO summit in Rome on June 3, I proposed a three-point plan that was taken up by the entire international community and must be implemented resolutely. It included the creation of a group made up of the best experts, like the IPCC for climate, to make reliable forecasts by product and by region; on the basis of such forecasts, the adoption of a global strategy implemented consistently by all the concerned international institutions, from the FAO to the IMF to the WTO; and the mobilization of existing financial capabilities through the reinvestment of the World Bank and regional banks in agricultural development, notably in Africa, and a call for long-term investors such as sovereign wealth funds. On this major issue, I want France to take the lead.

As for hydrocarbon prices, everyone now realizes that we have definitively entered the age of rare, expensive energy. Prices will continue to fluctuate around a long-term rising trend and the decades to come will be marked by two inevitable constraints: getting out of an oil-based economy; and improving the global economy's energy efficiency. It is a huge effort, much of which still remains to be accomplished. From this standpoint, 2008 truly marks the beginning of a new era, one that will notably see dozens of countries following the path that France chose years ago—that of civilian nuclear energy.

The third factor is political in nature—it is the confirmation of an ominous trend among emerging countries and Russia. As they assert their economic success, these countries are experiencing an upsurge in nationalism. We saw it in China during the Olympic Games, which that country saw as a confirmation of its return to the top ranks after a century and a half of difficulties and humiliations; we see it in India, where large companies are buying up foreign businesses; we see it in Russia, where the traumas of the 1990s have unfortunately led to a desire for restoration that some describe as quasi-imperial.

The cards of economic and political power have been reshuffled. Export strategies, strategies to control the supply of raw materials are profoundly altering the way world markets work. Commercial and financial flows are being restructured. Emerging countries now represent half of world growth. In 2007, China surpassed the United States as the second-largest global exporter. While the working-age population of the United States, Japan and the EU represents a total of 500 million people, there are 2.3 billion workers in emerging countries who are progressively entering a globalized job market.

Bolstered by this new economic situation, emerging countries and Russia want to become part of this new entente of great powers, but on their own terms. The days when the West dictated the tone, served as a reference and imposed its vision are over. One example among others is the WTO.

During previous negotiation cycles, when the U.S. and the EU reached an agreement, all the other players had no other choice but to rally around it. In Geneva this past July, the failure of the talks was confirmed when India refused to give in to American demands, throwing Brazil, which wanted an agreement, into disarray. It took seven years of negotiations within the framework of the Doha cycle to reach this point! Should we continue without changing anything? Or shouldn't we, rather, consider holding a meeting of the main heads of state concerned in order to discuss ways to end the deadlock and future adjustments to be made to the very modalities of multilateral trade negotiations? France has always spoken out on behalf of free trade. It wants Europe, the most open trading bloc in the world, to take the lead, with our eyes open and in a spirit of reciprocity.

In the new entente of powers, the general interest is quickly losing ground to the vigorous defense of national priorities. The emerging giants now have the means to make themselves heard, but their instinct is every man for himself. It has become much harder to seek satisfactory compromises on global issues, from the environment to energy and financial stability. It is a fact we must take into account.



What can we conclude from these three developments that have marked the past year and represent major risks?

For France, two complementary responses are obviously vital: We must both strengthen Europe, an essential global player, and resolutely revive initiatives on world governance. Given the challenges of the 21st century, we can no longer lean on the international institutions of the 20th.

How can we convince the emerging powers to play as a team if we don't bring them into the game? Security Council reform should be revived, and France supports the principle of an interim solution. The transformation of the G8 into the G13 or, even better, into the G14, to enable an Arab country to participate, is on the right track; at France's behest, the next G8 summit will be held for more than half the time in a G13 format.

But there is another major area we must work on if, in the 21st century, we want to have the effective multilateral tools that are more necessary than ever to solve the global problems of our time. What am I referring to?

Since the creation of the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions following the war, the number of nations has quadrupled and that of international organizations has increased tenfold. Today, these same nations pass laws and adopt decisions in each of these institutions without worrying about their overall consistency or even their compatibility. In a word, the international system is fragmented to the point that there is no comprehensive vision to be found anywhere.

The WTO offers an illuminating example. Not only has it become increasingly difficult, from one negotiating cycle to the next, to find a global compromise acceptable to all. On top of that, no one asks whether the choices negotiated on agriculture, for example, help respond to the alarming diagnosis issued within the FAO framework and are consistent with the strategies developed by the World Bank.

The same nations take part in these different organizations. But there are not enough study and arbitration bodies to oversee the consistency of the entire multilateral system, particularly the pertinence of the approaches chosen. Clearly, for security-related issues, it is the enlarged Security Council that will have a vocation to be the decision-making body, even more than it does already. For economic topics and global issues, I see only the G13/G14 as an informal but effective forum for arbitration, consistency and instigation. That gives you an idea of the importance of the progressive transformation of the G8 into the G13/G14.

Ambassadors,

On the issue of 21st-century world governance, the EU can be a reference and a major player. Why?

The era of "relative powers" that we have entered and the shortcomings of a fragmented multilateral system carry with them the risks of instability, rivalries and clashes. But this new situation can also lead to more solid, more lasting cooperation if it is based on shared principles and on compromises worked out in common.

For five decades now, Europeans have learned to practice among themselves this necessary cooperation among "relative powers." Building together, seeking each day the solutions that take into account the interests of each party only to transcend them in a collective action, has become second nature for Europeans. That is how we established the single market, created the euro, negotiated the Lisbon Treaty.

I believe it is up to the Europeans to propose such a cooperative approach to the world. Today, notions of enemy or adversary no longer have much currency among the great powers. The main question is whether ideas of responsible partnership and harmony can prevail over those of competition and rivalry.



First, however, Europe itself must have the institutions it needs to assume its responsibilities—those of a global player. That is one of the main merits of the Lisbon Treaty, with the creation of a stable European Council president who consults closely with EU heads of state and government, and that of a High Representative who has an actual European diplomatic corps at his disposal funded by the Community budget.

As President of the European Council, it is my duty to do my utmost to bring together the European family. The Irish people have a right to be heard and respected. At the same time, we all need the Lisbon treaty. With Prime Minister Brian Cowen, we are going to identify the guarantees that will allow Europe to take this new step forward in its construction. If necessary, I will return to Dublin.

The crisis in Georgia showed for the first time that if Europe wanted to, it could step forward at the very outset of a conflict to seek a peaceful solution. Isn't the EU's basic mission to ensure peace and protect Europeans? What's at stake in this conflict is absolutely essential. Its outcome will determine for a long time to come the relations of the EU and Russia. For Europeans, the only possible solution is one that is based on the law, on a dialogue that includes all the parties, and on respect for Georgia's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

The six-point cease-fire agreement of August 12, which bears the signatures of President Medvedev, President Saakashvili and my own, must be applied in its entirety. The military forces that have not yet withdrawn to the lines they held prior to the outbreak of hostilities must move without further delay. The international mechanism that is to replace the Russian patrols around South Ossetia must be deployed swiftly. The international discussions provided in point 6 of the agreement on the security and stability modalities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia must begin as soon as possible. In this context, the European Union firmly condemned yesterday Russia's decision to recognize the independence of these two territories. This decision is totally unacceptable.

More fundamentally, in Europe it took us centuries of clashes and two World Wars to understand that peace and prosperity are built with neighbors whose interests are respected and taken into account. It is this approach that Europe is proposing to Russia and to all the European nations that are not members of the Union: Together we must build a future of shared peace and prosperity.

No one wants to return to the time of the Cold War. NATO is not Russia's adversary but its partner. As for the European Union, it is resolved to build a positive, substantive relationship with that country. Today it is up to Russia to make a fundamental choice. France, with its EU partners, has demonstrated by its initiative how much it hopes Russia will choose understanding and cooperation, respect for the principles of the UN and OSCE charters. The European Council of September 1st will offer an opportunity for the 27 EU member states to define a common line on this fundamental issue.

The second circle in our neighborhood is of course that of the Mediterranean and the Middle East. I already mentioned the launch of the Union for the Mediterranean. I won't go back to it except to emphasize that for me, what's at stake there is just as important as what we want to accomplish on European soil.

But there's another issue on which Europe took the initiative and continues to play a major role: Iran. In 2003, Germany, the United Kingdom and France, with the High Representative, defined on behalf of Europe a strategy of dialogue and sanctions based on one conviction: The international community cannot allow Iran to have a nuclear weapon. Joined by the United States, Russia and China, the Europeans must firmly and decisively stay the course and, given the lack of response from Iran, step up sanctions in every area. They must do this for two reasons. No one has a better strategy to offer, and if we should fail, we all know the catastrophic alternative facing us, which I summed up last year in a few words: the Iranian bomb or bombing Iran.



I hope the dialogue with Iran will continue and that its leaders will realize the gravity of the stakes for their country. I invite them to think about how future generations will judge the choices they make today. For it is up to Iran to decide. Everything must be done to convince Teheran to choose cooperation over isolation and confrontation.

With respect to peace and security, we all too often overlook the fact that over the past 10 years, the EU has conducted some 15 military and policing operations from the Balkans to the Mideast to Africa. The time has come to take a new step, reviving the construction of a European defense so that it can make a growing contribution to world security. By taking a concrete, pragmatic approach, we can adopt an updated, more complete security strategy by the end of our Presidency. We can do it by agreeing on the level of ambition for our operations and on the military and civilian means that will be necessary; by deciding to develop, together with volunteer countries, the equipment we need; by organizing the training of our officers in military exchange-type programs [*“Erasmus militaire”*]; and by progressing toward a strong and competitive European defense.

A growing player in international peace and security, the EU can also play a decisive role in seeking solutions to the global problems of the 21st century. It must promote its values, defend its interests, protect its citizens and demand reciprocity whenever necessary. I plan on examining with the Commission how the EU, which provides 60 percent of the world’s total development aid and which is by far the planet’s leading commercial power can make itself better known and better use its assets to serve its objectives.

I am thinking in particular of agriculture, in which the EU is a key player. We must continue to modernize the Common Agricultural Policy and prepare the principles that will serve as the basis for the CAP of tomorrow. It is one of the great challenges of the French Presidency.

Faced with the economic slowdown affecting the entire world and notably threatening Europe, the EU must act swiftly and decisively. The objectives of the French Presidency are more relevant than ever: swiftly strengthening the rules and norms concerning stability and financial oversight, rating agencies and solvency, for a lack of transparency and uncertainty create mistrust; supporting activities targeting small- and medium-sized enterprises, notably within the framework of the European Small Business Act; and vigorously reviving policies on energy efficiency. I am determined to further accelerate, together with the Commission, the European Parliament and our 26 partners, the adoption of these measures to protect and strengthen European growth.

In the very sensitive area of migration, the European pact we will sign this fall could serve as a reference. Based on the recognition of the utility of organized, accepted legal immigration, on the fight against illegal immigration and on real cooperation with the countries concerned, this pact offers Europe’s partners a mutually beneficial cooperative approach.

But it is no doubt in the area of energy and the climate that the EU can most strongly contribute to shaping the world of the 21st century. This is the most important long-term issue, as the future of the planet depends on our ability to deal with it together. We are both the first generation that knows with certainty that human activity has a direct effect on climate change and the last generation in a position to act before irreversible consequences upset planetary balances.

The Bali negotiations ending in December 2009 in Copenhagen will tell if all nations are capable of uniting on objectives that are both ambitious and realistic. In reality, some 15 countries are responsible for 80 percent of greenhouse gas emissions. Half of them are members of the G8, and the other half represent the great emerging nations, notably China and India. In these negotiations, in which everyone is waiting for others to make the first move, only the European Union can trigger a dynamic that leads to success, i.e., to necessary reciprocal commitments from all participants. That is the huge challenge of the “energy-climate” package that will distribute the efforts the EU is prepared to make among its 27 member countries. All that will take place at the end of this year, and I will work personally with Jean-Louis Borloo to ensure that Europe is up to the challenge.



Ambassadors,

You can see that even more than it realizes, the European Union can help shape the world of the 21st century. First, by what it represents: the most successful example of an approach that replaces rivalry with cooperation thanks to common rules and a spirit of compromise that enables us, each day, to transcend our diverging interests.

Next, by the essential role it is called upon to play in order to build a world of prosperity, stability and democracy.

It is my deep conviction that the 21st century can be Europe's century. But the EU must show itself to be worthy of the heritage it received from its founding fathers and prove to its partners and citizens that it is capable of ambition, will and vision.

This is the fundamental mission that France is embracing on the occasion of its Presidency. For its part, France must remain in the vanguard of the European project, just as it must remain a world power. And it must organize itself in consequence. The two White Papers, one on foreign and European policy, the other on defense and national security, define the measures to take so that the government and its great core institutions can continue, in a world undergoing profound changes, to assume their responsibilities with imagination, determination and effectiveness.

Bernard Kouchner, Jean-Pierre Jouyet, Alain Joyandet and Rama Yade will speak to you about this at length, along with Alain Juppé, Louis Schweitzer and Jean-Claude Mallet, during the next two days. I would like to express, here, my full and unreserved support for these necessary reforms. And I want to express to you, Ambassadors, my recognition for the work you do each day in the service of France and Europe.

Thank you./.