

**SPEECH BY M. NICOLAS SARKOZY, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC,
TO THE PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

(Cape Town, 28 February 2008)

I should like to say how moved I feel at speaking before the Parliament of a country which in France we admire, I mean your country, South Africa. As we look back over the twentieth century we see that it was one of mankind's most brutal. The twentieth century for mankind was: two world wars, a genocide, the Holocaust, dictatorships and exiles.

The twentieth century for the world was a grim century. And Africa, your Africa was seared by the violence and the horror. Africa endured colonialism; it was not spared the consequences of the great world conflicts as your sons paid the price by fighting for the colonial powers. Then came the struggles for decolonization and new victims, then came conflicts between African countries that accompanied the Cold War. And then, as if that wasn't enough, Africa had to experience genocide. Africa, more than other regions, was the victim of scorn and racism.

Yet just as the twentieth century was drawing to a close, this often humiliated and belittled continent, and more particularly South Africa, taught the world a magnificent lesson in humanity. At a time when, right here, apartheid and its attendant violence prevailed, at a time when so many humiliations could have given rise to vengeance and further oppression, the people of South Africa, guided by outstanding men, decided to break with the long chain of adversity. This extraordinary human achievement, which is yours, owes much to the man who after 27 years in prison said to those who had long deprived him of his freedom: "The oppressor must be liberated just as surely as the oppressed. The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity."

You must believe me when I say that phrase has been immensely important to me in my political commitment. And you, the South Africans, have deliberately chosen reconciliation. In deciding to embark on this path, I have come to tell you as President of France that you also redeemed the century, as it were. You have allowed the century, despite its atrocities, to end on a powerful note of hope for mankind as a whole, and it isn't insignificant that this note of hope came from Africa.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is thus with deep respect for your nation that I stand before you, the representatives of this great people of South Africa, who herald a more just, a more fraternal and hence more humane society. It was to pay tribute to this people, through you, and the hope that this people have given us, that I wanted to come here to South Africa.

Because Africa has managed to ignite this hope, we want to work with South Africa today. Our world henceforth takes inspiration from this example to say there is no inevitability. To this fight against inevitability, France brings her values: freedom, equality and fraternity.

But I firmly believe that France and South Africa, working together, are in a better position than others to contribute to the emergence of a peaceful world.

We take up this common challenge first so that Europe and Africa can at long last forge new ties; ties that are no longer based on inequality, exploitation and resentment. To counter inequality, exploitation and resentment, I want equality, fairness and respect between Europe and Africa.

AFRICA/FRANCE

Relations between France and Africa go back a long way. I don't want to avoid any question or dodge any problem. Relations between France and Africa have at times been painful, and as President of France, I want to tell you that I have spoken elsewhere of the crimes that were committed and the mistakes made. And I do not intend forgetting them, because I know that on this continent, people remember, remember their forebears, remember the ordeals and remember the pain.

Nor should we forget what France owes Africa. I refer here particularly to the invaluable help Africa gave us during the two world wars. And I am not forgetting that South Africa fought side by side with us. The strength of these ties is not just a part of our past. It is also part of the French identity. Did you know, my dear friends, that nearly 10% of the French population can today claim African ancestry? It is also part of the African identity, through the French language.

But although these ties are deep and long-standing, relations between France and Africa, and more particularly sub-Saharan Africa, are becoming less close-knit as time goes on. The number of French citizens living in Africa, the volume of French exports to Africa and French investments in Africa, have declined. This has resulted in our traditional partners in Africa sometimes feeling that France has abandoned or at the very least lost interest in them.

The relationship is complicated because reason has always been mingled with feeling and passion, not only because the relationship has always been fraught with emotion but also because it is out of step with what the Africans want and what the French perceive.

Today, I say this from the bottom of my heart, the old pattern of relations between France and Africa is no longer understood by new generations of Africans, or for that matter by public opinion in France. We need to change the pattern of relations between France and Africa if we want to look at the future together.

I know that even within this Assembly some of you who were activists in the struggle for freedom still perceive these French-African relations through the prism of colonialism. For me, this makes the fact that you are here listening to me even more precious.

We find ourselves in a situation in which our political, military and economic engagement alongside Africa is seen by many not as a well-meant helping hand but as neo-colonial interference; but at the same time, have the honesty to recognize that some of us criticize indifference, withdrawal or lack of engagement as abandonment or ingratitude. For some we do too much or act wrongly, for the others not enough. And I am perfectly aware that Africans have had enough of being lectured about ethics and good governance. They perceive such lectures as arrogant and condescending; but at the same time, African civil society and public opinion want us, us French, to become directly involved alongside them in denouncing corruption and poor governance.

There is today a sort of African exception in public opinion: what is considered normal in relations with other world regions generates suspicion about the French government's intentions in relations with Africa.

African youth has an ambivalent relationship with France, made up of attraction and protest. Currently more than 100,000 Africans are at university in France. Contrary to what is often believed, there have never been more African students in French universities. Nevertheless, African young people have the feeling that France is closing her doors to them. Ladies and gentlemen, it is my duty as President of the Republic to dispel these misunderstandings, to expose these paradoxes which reveal a situation that is satisfactory neither for you nor for us.

I believe that French-African relations hold out much promise for the future provided we lend them new impetus. Just as South Africa epitomizes a new Africa, the relationship between France and South Africa should serve as inspiration for new relations between France and Africa as a whole. France and South Africa can have relations which are exemplary, balanced, transparent and, if you will permit me the term, rid of all hang-ups.

You have become our leading economic partner. 160 French companies are developing industrial partnerships and creating jobs. This morning President Thabo Mbeki and I signed agreements on energy, transport, science and tourism, which bear witness to the diversity of these ties.

We must go further. The level of development achieved by South Africa does not by itself explain the nature of our relations. And I wish to see a genuine partnership between us.

Mr President, dear Thabo, you are in the habit of saying that "South Africa cannot be an island of prosperity in a sea of poverty". France thinks exactly the same thing.

I want to state before you that the security and prosperity of France and Europe are indissolubly linked with the security and prosperity of Africa. Only the 14 kilometres of the Straits of Gibraltar separate Africa and Europe. Failing to understand that our destinies are linked would be a historic misinterpretation with tragic consequences. Europe and Africa will share the same destiny in terms of security and development. France hopes for the Renaissance of Africa with all her heart and soul, she hopes for it for

the sake of everything that unites her with Africa. South Africa wants this Renaissance. She has given the signal. She has set the example.

The Renaissance is not first and foremost a matter of resources. It is, ladies and gentlemen, above all a matter of mindsets. But what is a Renaissance man? He is a man who believes that everything is possible. A Renaissance man is a man who believes in man. And because he believes in man, he thinks that man can change the world. A Renaissance man is a man whose dreams are greater than what he himself can accomplish!

To help bring about this Renaissance, France wants to place her relations with Africa on a new footing. France does not want to be in Africa to perpetuate, in different forms, the unequal relations that belong to a past that is over and done with. If France wants to place her relations with Africa on a new footing, France must start by recognizing and upholding her interests in Africa.

Peace and security in Africa, the struggle against poverty, the economic growth of the continent and your inclusion in the process of globalization are interests that are shared by both our countries. African development is in France's interest as it is in South Africa's. Because wars, pandemics, trafficking and terrorism in Africa will have direct consequences in Europe and France. If you fail today, there will be tragedy for us tomorrow.

AFRICA/INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Better-regulated globalization is in the interest of both France and South Africa. Globalization is now here to stay. It would be unrealistic and dangerous to attempt to manage world affairs without Africa. France won't accept world affairs being dealt with without an African country making its contribution and speaking on Africa's behalf.

Do the other world leaders realize that Europe and Africa together account for nearly half the world's countries? And together – but only together – Europeans and Africans will be able to influence the course of globalization. South Africa is for us a partner in globalization. We have a common approach. And to put it bluntly, it is profoundly abnormal for the G8 not to give an equal place to the G5. We can't claim to be dealing with major world affairs unless we give an equal place to the G5, and so to South Africa.

I think the same applies to the United Nations Security Council. There are a billion Africans in the world. Who can possibly imagine Africa not having at least one permanent member seat at the United Nations Security Council? Quite obviously it should.

I think the same applies to the major international organizations such as the IMF. I participated, dear Thabo, as you know, in my first G8 as President of the Republic in Heiligendamm. And I noted that for two-and-a-half days we were eight countries working there and that for the lunch on the final day, we invited – would you believe it! –

two-and-a half billion inhabitants. I was embarrassed for the last-minute guests who should have been invited from the first minute of this summit. Not one country from South America. Not one country from Africa. Not India and not China. For the twenty-first century, we have to have the organization of the twenty-first century and not that of the twentieth century. No, it is not for us to decide who should represent Africa. But I see that South Africa is forging ahead in the vanguard of the continent; and that South Africa is excellently placed to make her voice heard in these fora. President Mbeki has done France the honour of bestowing on her "African Citizenship". This is to my mind a great compliment and I want France to live up to it.

DEFENCE

During the presidential election campaign I said I wanted to renew the relationship between France and Africa. I shall see this through; I ask you to understand me. Three weeks ago in Chad, when rebel forces were attempting to overthrow the legitimate authorities of the country, France refrained from becoming involved in the fighting. I did not authorize a single French soldier to fire on an African, even though for me it was right to support Chad's legal government. It's an unprecedented change.

But I want to go further today.

This change has to be pursued, because the French military presence in Africa is still grounded in agreements reached just after the end of colonialism, 50 years ago! I am not saying that these agreements were not justified at the time. But I maintain that what was done in 1960 no longer has the same relevance today. Their wording is obsolete. It is now unthinkable, for example, for us to be drawn into domestic conflicts. The Africa of 2008 is no longer the Africa of 1960! France and her African partners will take this fact fully on board. And I want before the South African Parliament to make four proposals.

The first relates to the defence agreements between France and the African countries. They must reflect Africa as it is today and not as it was yesterday. They must rest on the strategic interests of France and her African partners. I am not saying that the existing agreements should necessarily be scrapped and that everything should be erased with the stroke of a pen. But I am saying that France wants to undertake discussions with all the African States concerned, with a view to adapting the existing agreements to the realities of the present, taking full account of the African countries' wishes. France will be open to dialogue with all those who wish to establish a new security partnership with her.

Second proposal: I am going to place our relations on a new footing, on a principle which used not to exist and which I shall impose, the principle of transparency. Transparency is the best guarantee of solid and lasting relations, the best antidote to fantasies and misunderstandings. Contrary to past practice, I announce to the South African Parliament that all the defence agreements between France and the African countries will be published in full. I also intend closely to involve the French Parliament in setting out the major guidelines for France's policy in Africa.

Third, I propose that the French military presence in Africa serve first and foremost to help Africa achieve its goal of building, as it wishes to do, its own collective security arrangements. The African Union wishes to have standby forces by 2010-2012? Well then, let that objective also be France's objective! It is not France's role to maintain armed forces in Africa indefinitely, Africa has to take responsibility for its security problems. Let me be clearly understood: this does not mean in any way that France is disengaging from Africa. It's the exact opposite. I want France to work more closely alongside the African Union on building the collective security system that Africa needs, because African security is of course first and foremost a matter for the Africans.

Finally, my last proposal is to make Europe a major partner of Africa in the task of bringing about peace and security. This is the meaning of the partnership established by our two continents in Lisbon last December. This is in the interest of all of us, since a strong Europe needs a strong Africa. But I am well aware that the best guarantors of peace and security are democracy and justice. So let's talk about democracy and justice. In Côte d'Ivoire France is keen to see free, fair and recognized elections held. No country can hope for development without organizing democratic elections. We have been waiting for them for too many years. And the same is true in Zimbabwe. It also applies to Chad, where all of us are called upon to immediately make further efforts to help democracy take root. And I want to say: democracy and human rights also apply in Africa and are not a conditionality imposed from outside. Democracy and human rights are in no way foreign to Africa. They are aspirations of the African peoples that France shares.

DEVELOPMENT

When it comes to development, I want France to contribute more actively to the fight against poverty in Africa. France will maintain her financial commitment for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. President Mbeki asked me about this, my answer is clear. But I also called for France to work in a more targeted way to foster accelerated economic growth and for us to contribute directly to the creation of African companies that will generate jobs.

This is why I have decided today to launch an initiative to support economic growth. This initiative will be implemented by the French Development Agency. It will be in three parts:

- We are going to create a €250 million investment fund to acquire holdings in other mixed or thematic funds in order to develop African businesses.

- The second component is the creation of a guarantee fund, which will likewise have a €250 million endowment to facilitate access to bank credit and capital for African SMEs.

- The third component will be the doubling of the activity of the French Development Agency in support of the private sector, with a €2 billion commitment, which I announce to you here, over five years.

Overall, France's initiative will thus mobilize €2.5 billion over the five-year period, which will be used to directly or indirectly finance nearly 2,000 companies and create 300,000 jobs. When this initiative is included, the total French bilateral financial commitment to Sub-Saharan Africa will thus amount to €10 billion over the coming five-year period. After this, who will dare talk about France disengaging from Africa?

IMMIGRATION/CO-DEVELOPMENT

Finally, I should like to end by bringing up a difficult issue, but there's no point in travelling abroad if one doesn't talk about difficult matters. I should like to talk about the future of relations between France and Africa as regards migration. 65% of the 200,000 foreign nationals who take up residence in France every year come from the African continent. Yet this is not exclusively a North-South issue. The bulk of the migratory movement takes place within the African continent itself. South Africa – you yourselves – alone receives nearly a quarter of all migrant populations in Africa.

The reality of immigration is not satisfactory today. It is not satisfactory for us, but it is no more satisfactory for you. We, Europeans and South Africans, face the same challenge. 500,000 people enter Europe illegally every year, the scale of the phenomenon in South Africa is also forcing that country to deport a very large number of people. Who could be satisfied with such a situation?

I have never said, because I don't think it, that immigration is a phenomenon that must be fought. And I have always rejected the scandalous idea of zero immigration, an idea that is dangerous and unrealistic. France and South Africa are two nations that owe a part of their momentum to the contribution of migrant workers, we can't forget this.

However, no country in the world can afford to take in a number of migrants exceeding its ability to extend to them a decent welcome, offering them work, housing, education and health care. Upsetting this balance leads to massive unemployment among the foreigners, to exclusion and to ghettos. So it is the responsibility of any government to decide how many migrants it is prepared to take in and under what conditions.

France is preparing a major reform of her immigration policy. An annual quota of new migrants allowed into France will be debated and voted on each year by Parliament. The ceiling will be broken down into sub-categories defined by grounds for immigrating – work or family reunification. It will be negotiated with the countries of origin as part of agreements on concerted management of migration flows. We can't manage immigration solely by decision of the host country, it also has to be by decision of the country of departure.

The time has come to build a European-African partnership on migration, covering three essential, to my mind crucial issues:

First the brain drain you suffer. This is an extremely serious matter. A 2006 WHO report highlights this incredible situation: Africa bears 24% of the world's burden of illness and this same Africa which bears 24% of the world's burden of illness has only 3% of its health-care personnel. How are you going to treat your sick if all the doctors you train leave and come to our countries to try and find a development they can't find at home? We need to put an end to the brain drain. This situation is not tenable. We must avoid African elites emigrating for good. Did you know that there are more Benin doctors practising in my country than Benin doctors practising in Benin? Don't you think that Benin, which is one of the world's poorest countries, has greater need of its doctors than France?

Second, organized crime: it is time the international community mobilized against the odious trafficking which exploits the poverty of the hapless human beings who feel their only hope is to leave their country. We must take more severe action against those modern-day slave-drivers who dishonour mankind.

Finally, co-development, which involves mobilizing migrant populations to support the development of their countries of origin. This new project is part of a broad package of measures adopted at the 2nd EU-Africa Summit in Lisbon. And I shall develop the relationship between the host countries and countries of origin when I exercise, from 1 July this year, the duties of President of the European Union.

Beyond State-to-State relations, we must increase the ties which exist between us. Now I quite understand that these ties have given rise to a lot of disappointment in the past. And I would particularly like to say how keen I am to see the continuation of the Africa-France Summit meetings. But I want the way these meetings are run and their nature to change. Their purpose and organization need to be adapted.

It is necessary to change the Africa-France summits, to change the methods and change the objectives. Their preparation should be better coordinated; the discussions should be structured differently; their timing should be better matched to that of other meetings organized by the European Union and OIF [international Francophone organization]. Finally, we could consider giving them a more practical focus, tasking them with taking stock and formulating guidelines. I suggest that the forthcoming ministerial follow-up meeting that precedes the next Summit scheduled in Cairo in 2009 take a common position on new arrangements. Let me make myself clear: because I believe in the necessity of the friendship between France and Africa, I want no taboos when it comes to putting our relations on a new footing.

At the start of the twenty-first century, our generation bears the heavy responsibility of avoiding the disasters which befell the previous century. So South Africa's message of humanity and reconciliation must guide us.

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In my office in Paris, my dear friends, there is a photograph of Nelson Mandela, which he gave me when he came last year. When I look at this face, which for the entire world has become the face of forgiveness, I always think of two things he said. The first was during the 1994 election campaign. He said to those for whose dignity he had fought so hard – he had the courage to tell them this –: "If you want better things, you must work hard. We cannot do it all for you; you must do it yourselves." The second is the magnificent passage in his memoirs in which he says – and this is very moving for us –: "No one is born hating another person because of the colour of their skin, religion or background. Hatred and intolerance have to be learned and, if they can be learned, so can love and tolerance." When Nelson Mandela talks in this way, he doesn't belong to South Africa, he honours the whole world.

Your history teaches us that men are only fully human through and thanks to other men. Your country is a constant demonstration of this; you have achieved coexistence of the descendents of slaves and of masters; achieved the coexistence of farmers from England, The Netherlands and France and of Zulu conquerors and Xhosa warriors; the descendents of tenant farmers from Gujarat and of miners from all over southern Africa.

Your history, my dear South African friends, demonstrates that the values of your revolution, like those of the French Revolution, will always make it possible to transform the world. Together, we believe in equal rights, we believe in equal dignity and we reject racism.

Your history tells us that in order to succeed, the world needs Africa and its voice – an upstanding, vibrant and free Africa.

Long live South Africa,

Long live France./.