

SEA ISLAND SUMMIT 2004

G8

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PRESS BRIEFING BY  
FRENCH PRESIDENT JACQUES CHIRAC  
Briefing Room East  
Sea Island, Georgia

12:17 P.M. EDT

PRESIDENT CHIRAC: Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. I'm delighted to have this opportunity to meet with you today. I must say, I would have been happier to be able to have greater access to all of you. But, as you know, I will have the opportunity to give a press conference in Savannah on tomorrow.

I know, of course, that a number of your colleagues are listening in on this press conference, and I would like to welcome them here and to thank them for listening.

As you well know, we met yesterday evening. You also know I had talks with the Prime Minister of Canada this morning and with Prime Minister Koizumi; and I will be meeting with the King of Jordan this afternoon.

Our first working session this morning was dedicated to economic issues and developmental issues. And in a somewhat impromptu fashion, we heard a number of answers to the questions that some of our colleagues were asking about the reform of the institutions in the European Union.

We will be shortly having lunch with five Arab countries, the President of Afghanistan -- President Karzai -- and also the President of Turkey. We shall be discussing the items on the agenda. And in the afternoon, we will have a very interesting working session on security and safety. And dinner this evening will give us an opportunity to discuss regional issues.

Tomorrow, we will discuss sustainable development. And the summit will conclude on a dialogue with a number of African leaders. The purpose of this meeting will be, of course, to discuss and review NEPAT.

As I said, we discussed a number of issues this morning, economic issues, growth. Each of the participants clearly indicated in their address the feeling they had about development and possibilities and prospects for development. We have said that a number of us, underlying the fact that there was a tremendous scope for progress and development in China. The economy is picking up significantly in Japan. There is strong, very strong growth in Russia, and a growth trend that is picking up also in Europe.

People are becoming more optimistic about Europe. A number of our colleagues mentioned two percentage points as being the basic growth rate for Europe in the coming year.

Now, of course, we also shared concerns and worries about a number of issues. I mentioned, amongst other colleagues, the potential consequences of the significant American trade imbalance, trade deficit and budget deficit, and the impact it could have on exchange rates and interest rates. I heard and realized that President Bush was very much aware of all of these issues.

We also discussed oil and we said that there were a number of uncertainties -- political, economic, technical ones. And that we therefore on oil had to try and keep in check consumption and also support the establishment of alternative energy sources. And I was very interested when President Bush paid a special tribute to the French approach which was to use nuclear fuel as being our main source of energy and power.

I also had an opportunity in the course of the meeting to say how much interest we should pay on the economy, of course, but also its impact on social and environmental issues. This gave me an opportunity to take on board and carry forward some elements of the report drawn up by Mr. Somavia, the Director General of the ILO, and I stressed two main points.

First of all, the major institutions -- international institutions such as the social institutions of the ILO, for instance, and also the economic and trade organizations, we shouldn't, as I say, leave them to work out independently from one another. We should make sure that there is some consistency in what they do and coordination amongst their actions.

I more specifically focused on the need for coordination between the ILO and the WTO, and also the ILO and the international financial institutions. That is a point that was very significantly stressed by Mr. Somavia in his report, and I think he is absolutely right.

I also had an opportunity to discuss fraud and piracy in today's world -- and counterfeiting. Now, our experts are telling us that these counterfeiting and fraudulent approaches account for hundreds of billions of Euro in trade in today's world, which clearly indicates that we have to be much more effective in fighting against these criminal practices; especially when we realize that there are number of honest and law-abiding organizations that are sometimes affected.

We also spoke about delocalization and relocation of jobs. But I also stressed how important it was to make sure that major international corporations should abide by the environmental principles that we have; that they shouldn't just up stakes and relocate in developing countries, without taking much heed of social legislation and environmental legislation.

So what I was saying was that we should try and establish a system, a mechanism that would enable us to sanction those corporations that would act without taking due account

of social and environmental legislation in emerging countries. This also led me to share a thought about the need we have to try and establish a greater dialogue between the G8 countries, meaning the major economies of today's world, and those countries that are becoming very significant on the global economic stage; China, for instance.

So I think that we cannot discuss major economic issues nowadays without discussing these issues with China, with India, Brazil, South Africa. So I think it's true of a couple of countries that have become major, major players in global trade. So we have to discuss these issues with them in some way or another. That is exactly what I had tried to do in Evian last year, by establishing an enlarged dialogue, as we had called it, to establish a link between these leaders and set in train a habit that we should have of working with them.

I think these are the main topics we discussed this morning. I don't want to discuss here the issues that we will be discussing over lunch, mainly the greater Middle East issue. This being said, I would like to just share a thought about nonproliferation. Now, nonproliferation is one of the issues that we have on the agenda for this afternoon. It's a very important item. We have worked hard on these issues, I must say. A number of decisions relating to that topic have been made in the Security Council, also in Evian. And in line with these decisions, we have stepped up our control of nonproliferation in three directions.

First of all, we are implementing the global partnership -- a global partnership that was launched a couple of years ago, as you know; and its purpose is to increase security and safety of sensitive installations and plants in Russia, mainly. An increasing number of countries are supporting this program, and the number of countries eligible to this program is also increasing.

Secondly, we wanted to work on the Evian initiative -- the PSI initiative, the Proliferation Security Initiative. The purpose of this initiative is to fight against trafficking in nuclear, biological or bacteriological materials. And also, there is a decision that has been taken on recycling of nuclear fuels. In that respect, we are working within the current international frameworks and context. We are working on the export of these sensitive materials. Up until we have finished negotiating these new instruments, we have said we would be very low-key and very careful in exporting such substances.

And we will, of course, review topical issues, such as Libya, Iran and North Korea; which are issues that I mentioned also with the Prime Minister of Japan when I met him this morning.

So, this is what I could tell you in a few sentences, and I'm ready to take a few questions if you have any to put to me.

Q Good afternoon, sir. President Bush has invited Turkey to take part in the debate on the greater Middle East. Turkey is a member of OECD, NATO and the Council of Europe.

And alongside Turkey, Bahrain, Afghanistan and Yemen were invited. What do we expect of Turkey in this context?

PRESIDENT CHIRAC: Well, let me first of all say that Turkey is a major, major country; a country that is currently experiencing -- how shall I put it -- tremendous changes in terms of modernization of the economy and democratization of the regime. Turkey is also a major regional power and also a major global one. So it is only normal that Turkey should be part of this dialogue, and that is precisely why the Prime Minister of Turkey will come and join us over lunch. I'm delighted to be able to discuss these issues with him.

A question from Savannah?

Q I wanted to tell you, sir, that there are about 100 journalists in Savannah; and therefore, there are more journalists than you think there are.

President Bush and Prime Minister Blair discussed this morning an expanded role for NATO in Iraq. They hope, apparently, to be able to discuss this before the NATO Summit in Turkey. Now, do you, as France, feel that there could be NATO troops in Iraq, and what do you make of this proposal?

PRESIDENT CHIRAC: Well, of course I'm very much open to debates and discussions. That being said, I do not believe that it is NATO's purpose to intervene in Iraq; nor do I believe that it would be relevant or fortunate or even well-understood by people in Iraq and/or abroad.

So I have reservations vis-à-vis this initiative. This being said, it is a hypothetical question. But it can only be examined, in my view, if the sovereign Iraqi government were to express in no uncertain terms that that was their intention and to ask for it.

Q How would you describe French relations with the U.S. right now?

PRESIDENT CHIRAC: Well, in all candor and honesty, I find that the relationship is excellent. Now, I know that there might be controversy once in a while, but it happens to be that controversy is at the heart of democracy and that democracy supports controversy. Maybe it's only normal. And if you look at the substance of our relationship, I must say that the relationship between the U.S. and France today is a good relationship -- as good as it should be amongst old friends, such as we.

Another question from Savannah, sir?

Q France voted with the rest of the Security Council yesterday on the sovereignty of Iraq. What comments and how enthusiastic are you?

PRESIDENT CHIRAC: Now, I don't know that we can say that we were enthusiastic, seeing we were talking about an exit strategy for a crisis as significant as Iraq. I'm not

sure that that's the pertinent and relevant word; but I must say that we were satisfied -- pleased to do so.

As I have already said -- and I said it this morning to President Bush -- I must express once again our thanks vis-à-vis the way in which the negotiation was conducted. And I wanted to thank everyone also for the great open-mindedness in which American diplomats worked to improve constantly the resolution over the last few days.

Now, the question wasn't who's right, who's wrong. It was really a question of effectiveness, of efficiency. Now, in the current Iraqi crisis, I feel, I believe, that the only exit strategy is to give the Iraqi people the feeling, the impression that the Iraqi government that will lead them is a fully sovereign and independent government. That was crucial.

Now, of course that meant that here or there mindsets have to develop, to change slightly; even on our American friends' side. And that also meant that there were concessions to be made that weren't always that easy -- on security, maybe, and on the relationship between the Iraqi government and the multinational force. There were political issues, judicial ones, legal ones, diplomatic ones. It was, on the whole, a difficult issue.

This being said, I want to acknowledge the fact that American colleagues understood that they had to play ball, and they did play ball. Now, this meant that those partners that were very much careful of the indubitable nature of the sovereignty of the Iraqi people -- the Germans, the French, the Russians, the Spaniards, maybe, and others -- were in a position to express their satisfaction at the end of this whole process. And I'm pleased to be able to do so once again.

Q Mr. President, I think France was initially quite reluctant on the greater Middle East initiative. You seem more favorable nowadays. Could you maybe tell us why France feels that this initiative is positive, and what sort of steps in the right direction have we done and seen on either side -- or any side -- to bring this about?

PRESIDENT CHIRAC: France never questioned or challenged the need that we had to help a number of countries in the Middle East and in Northern Africa to come closer to a state of modernization, both political and economic. Now, we weren't going to challenge it because we were the initiators of the Barcelona process, which had and served the same purpose. So it would have been rather inconsistent an approach to not support this.

However, we feel in France that reforms cannot be imposed from the outside; that we have to convince, that we have to discuss, that we have to cooperate. This must be done taking on board the diversity of the cultures and the history of the different peoples and also the diversity of the problems they are faced with. Therefore, we felt that what we really needed to do was to open a friendly and constructive dialogue that would help us support those countries that want to go in that direction.

So this is pretty much the spirit of Barcelona and that is something that we already do with a number of countries -- with Syria, for instance -- on the renovation of the administration and government structures. I therefore feel that there is a good frame of mind that we are operating in. I think we now need to discuss it with those people that are directly interested in it.

Another question from Savannah, sir?

Q Mr. President, what should we make of the fact that you will not be going to President Reagan's funeral on Friday?

PRESIDENT CHIRAC: I think there's a clear explanation. Of course I did know President Reagan and Nancy Reagan. I have had a number of opportunities to meet him and to work with him. I would have wanted to go and bring my personal feelings of sympathy to Mrs. Reagan -- feelings that I conveyed in written form.

This being said, I have a number of obligations in Paris that I couldn't rearrange; and that is why I've asked my Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Barnier, to represent me in Washington; and also to explore the possibility of former President Giscard d'Estaing to represent France. I hope this will be possible; I think it might be.

Q Mr. President, what link do you establish between the greater Middle East on the one hand, the positions adopted by the Israeli cabinet, and the Israeli-Palestinian approach? Are we speaking about smoke and mirrors, is it just fanciful; or is there a consistent and coherent approach to rejoining all of the three questions? What is your approach and can this be linked and bound within the roadmap?

PRESIDENT CHIRAC: It seems clear and obvious that whenever we deal with the Middle East and North Africa, there is one clear prerequisite. That is that we need real, genuine progress on the road back to peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians. That is something that we are not experiencing for the moment. We feel that this is a prerequisite. We feel that there could be excellent cooperation between the Middle East and North Africa on the one hand, and Western countries on the other if we could overcome this obstacle.

And that is why we support, and say so -- we support unreservedly the roadmap. Now it might have its flaws, but at least it exists and we must support it. And I feel that we should all focus our efforts so that we should implement the roadmap.

Now, if need be, we should also envisage the possibility of having a Western presence on the ground to make sure that undertakings are abided by.

Question from Savannah?

Q Mr. President, how serious do you think the U.S. administration will engage itself in the solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? Will it engage itself in a moderating role?

PRESIDENT CHIRAC: I do think so. The simple reason why I believe so is that I can't see what else they could do. This conflict is tragic. The consequences of this conflict on both parties and in the Middle East, more generally, and across the world are very important. After all, we cannot disjoin, disconnect some events across the world from what is happening on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

So I think it is only normal and I think it is a duty on the major heads of state and government and their administrations -- first and foremost the United States -- to play their full role, assume the responsibilities and make sure that the roadmap can be implemented unfalteringly so that we can then come back to the negotiating table and work at a negotiated peace settlement.

The purpose and the objective of that would be what President Bush has exactly said: two sovereign, independent and secure states.

Q You met Prime Minister Koizumi. I understand you expressed your support for our policy vis-à-vis North Korea. What could you do to try and help improve the situation? And how do you react to the significant reduction in the level of American troops in South Korea? The Americans are going to reduce significantly the level of forces in South Korea. This will undoubtedly change the situation Korea. What do you make of this?

PRESIDENT CHIRAC: Let me first say that when I spoke to the Prime Minister of Japan, I expressed the full support of the French authorities for Japanese initiatives and policies taken vis-à-vis North Korea. We feel that both visits were very positive. And I used the opportunity of our meeting to say how pleased we were that some children of abducted Japanese had been returned.

I do believe that within these six-way talks Japan is being very active and very positive. That's why I told the Prime Minister that within the U.N. Security Council, we did support, indeed, this Japanese approach.

As for the reduction of level of U.S. troops in South Korea, I don't think I can pass any kind of judgment. This issue has to be dealt between the consigned parties.

One final question, okay?

Q Mr. President, have you had an opportunity to discuss in Sea Island and idea that is very dear to your heart -- that is the establishment of a financial levy.

PRESIDENT CHIRAC: That is indeed a very dear idea to me, because I feel we have to get to it at some point. It is something that we will have to take on board.

The question is, how will it be done more specifically? We haven't discussed this yet. We will be discussing it this afternoon. I will -- and you can well expect that -- defend very

vigorously and very forcefully the idea of increasing ODA; for indeed, ODA is nowadays far too low. And I can't see -- nobody can see how ODA will actually reach the millennium goal levels that were set for it to help reduce poverty by 2015.

And it's precisely in this frame of mind that I will be supporting the budget proposal of an international finance facility and also support very formally the proposals that I will be putting to the United Nations Security Council very shortly on a international levy that would complement, supplement ODA so that we can do what we have said we would do in terms of solidarity across the world.

Thank you very much.

END 12:46 P.M. EDT