



## **Statement to the French by M. Jacques Chirac, President of the Republic.**

Paris, 31 May 2005

My dear compatriots in metropolitan and overseas France and abroad,

On 29 May, the referendum on the European Constitution ushered in a period of difficulties and uncertainties for Europe and France. In this period we must rally round in support of the national interest.

The vote does not mark the rejection of the European ideal. It is a plea to be heard. A plea for action. A plea for results.

Strong, diverse, and sometimes contradictory expectations have been expressed. They have in common a sense of dissatisfaction and insecurity in the face of today's world.

After the major reforms carried out to remove the handicaps which have built up in the past and prepare for the future, you are appealing for determined, immediate action to address the present difficulties, whether unemployment or to do with purchasing power, as quickly as possible.

To implement such action, I have decided to inject new impetus into French policy.

Today, Jean-Pierre Raffarin handed me his government's resignation.

In three years, in difficult circumstances, he took steps to bring about France's recovery which I applaud. He restored the authority of the State and lessened the sense of insecurity. He created the conditions for getting our economy moving again. He carried out the pensions and health insurance reform, reforms which were essential to safeguard our social welfare system and thus to safeguard the founding principle of equality for all French people.

In spite of the difficulties of the reforms, he always acted in a spirit of openness and dialogue. I want to pay a warm tribute to him personally and to his action.

Confronted with the present situation, as at other difficult moments in our history, we have to react, rally together, overcome our difficulties and break the logjams in order to take our country forward.



## PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

The 29 May vote has ushered in, admittedly, a difficult period. Respecting the message of French men and women, France must act. For Europe vastly increases our strengths. We cannot think of safeguarding our economic and social model, we cannot think of advancing our values in the world without playing our full role in Europe.

In the coming weeks and months, I shall act, in line with our commitments, with the paramount concern of defending our national interests. Together with our partners, I shall seize every possible opportunity to reconnect with a great European ambition.

But the priority for government action, serving the men and women of France, is obviously employment. This requires active efforts by the whole nation. I am determined to make these efforts wholly consistent with our French model.

This model is not the Anglo-Saxon sort, but nor is it one synonymous with opposition to change. It is a model founded on dynamism and individual initiative, on solidarity and social dialogue.

The urgent need is not to keep on adding new legislation, it's to ensure the resolute commitment of all players. When it is a matter of growth, unemployment, vulnerability, no solution must be ruled out through prejudice, none must be discouraged. The sole criterion is effectiveness. The government will commit itself resolutely to this path. I call for the same commitment from businesses and unions because the goal is to show that by acting together, with only the national interest in mind, we are capable of winning the battle for employment while remaining ourselves!

That, my dear compatriots, is the vital mission I have decided to entrust to Dominique de Villepin. Because he has the necessary authority, skill and experience. And because in the global competition for activity and jobs, he knows that France, if she gives herself the means, has the capacity to be strong provided she is true to her republican traditions and true to her social pact.

I have asked him to form a united and determined team of skilled and talented people. A team supported by the personal commitment of the leaders of the majority party.

In a unifying spirit, I have asked Nicolas Sarkozy to rejoin the government as *Ministre d'Etat* [equivalent to Deputy Prime Minister] and he has agreed.

My dear compatriots,

In the face of these challenges, of our ambition, we shall succeed only if we are united and work in a spirit of dialogue. United, putting party politics aside, seeking only the general interest and justice. United so as not to add the risk of division to the difficulties we must tackle head-on.



# PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

In the coming period, you can count on my commitment and determination to sustain and take forward the French model.

Long live the Republic.

Long live France.

|