

# Shaping global destiny

## France's president **François Hollande** spoke recently on how his country is working towards a fairer world, according to firm principles

**O**ur world is uncertain, unstable and unpredictable at the present time. But when has it been anything else in recent years? It was certainly organised according to a system: by the Cold War for many years, and later by what has been called a 'unipolar world'. The minister of foreign affairs ... has spoken of a zero-polar world!

But what does that mean? It means that we are faced with responsibilities – all countries, but more especially those whose status and history, as well as their economy or their population, confer upon them a role in shaping global destiny ...

France can do so only according to principles it has laid down ...

The first principle is peace; that is the posture constantly adopted by France. On every occasion it is the solution we seek through dialogue, through negotiation. And when it is no longer possible to achieve it, we then take action, always within the framework of an international mandate, that of the United Nations.

That is what we have done in Mali ... at the request of a country that is our friend, and, contrary to what has been said, France was at no time alone. First, because France was there with our Malian friends; second, because France was accompanied or, more precisely, France supported African forces that were also mobilised; and, last, because from the outset France received support from the countries of Europe and the United States. It was a year ago that the decision was taken.

And the outcome is there to see and must demonstrate to the international community that we can take action and succeed. The jihadi extremists have been defeated in the space of a year. They have not all disappeared but they have been driven, pushed back. Mali's territorial integrity has been restored and free, transparent elections organised. The state of Mali is being rebuilt with its new president, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita.

Just when we thought the task was finished, fears arose of a major catastrophe in the Central African Republic. Already, incidents of brutality and violence, of which women were often the first victims, were leading to the conclusion that there was a possible risk of genocide. Inevitably, I had the events in Rwanda in mind.

The month or more that we have been in the Central African Republic – 1,600 French soldiers and 4,000 African soldiers – has brought about, not a halt to all conflict, all fighting, but something approaching calm ...

### Crisis resolution

Looking beyond Africa, France also intends to play its part in crisis resolution. First, in the Middle East. We are encouraging a resumption of the dialogue between the Israelis and Palestinians ...

Our greatest concern in the region is of course Syria. I refuse to accept that the choice that might be placed before the world will be either the perpetuation of a dictatorial regime, that of Bashar al-Assad, or Islamist extremism. I think that there is in Syria a majority of



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the population of all faiths, all communities with just one desire: reconciliation and democracy ...

The Syrian conflict has many consequences for the region: for Jordan, where tens of thousands of refugees are making life even more complicated; for Lebanon, where at least a third of the population is now of Syrian origin. We must help those countries ...

I also know that the Gulf states are making the necessary effort to facilitate those settlements. But there are not only conflicts that continue. Others have prospects for settlement. I am thinking here of the events in Tunisia, where three years ago the Arab Spring was born. Today, a new constitution is on the way to being adopted and further democratic



President François Hollande has said that, on every occasion, peace is the first solution sought by France through dialogue and negotiation

elections will take place this year ... That example may inspire other countries, and I have in mind Egypt, which has experienced violent events, but where the goals must be the same: the search for a democratic way forward in which the rights of every individual can be respected ...

Our concern for Iran was great. It remains so but there is now an interim agreement reached after ten years of impasse. France ... laid down requirements in all of the discussions – requirements that have become those of the entire international community. There is no question of allowing Iran to equip itself with nuclear weapons. But in the meantime, we should note the progress that has been achieved: the enrichment process has been halted ...

The second principle underlying our foreign policy is to contribute to the building of a new international order.

Where trade is concerned, the crisis – which has affected the developed world but with consequences for the entire planet – has in the past prevented all progress on trade negotiations. It is my belief that the recovery in the global economy that is now evident will be all the stronger if trade is facilitated.

The proof of this is that after five years of successive failures the World Trade Organization has reached an agreement in Bali ...

Similarly, an economic partnership agreement has been signed between Europe and Canada after years of negotiation. Others are on the way between Europe and Japan, and between Europe and the United States ...

The opening up of markets, the removal of non-tariff barriers, the development of trade ... all of this can ... stimulate the global economy. But there must also be rules, especially where currencies are concerned ...

In the same way, we must arrive at an international system that combats social dumping ... On this we can welcome the progress accomplished at the G20 in St Petersburg: the automatic exchange of information, removal of banking secrecy, combating fiscal optimisation – it is all there! ...

France is working towards a new international order, which also means a fairer world. France is the fourth largest donor where development aid is concerned ... [Our] road map has been revised for greater coherence with the combat against extreme poverty, as well as with the imperative of environmental protection.

France has accepted a responsibility for 2014 that will come to fruition in 2015: the organisation of the climate conference. As I often say, we volunteered to be its host and we were up against limited competition because of memories of Copenhagen. That failure was a resounding one, not for the organisers but for the international community ...

#### Prospects for the future

What matters is that we always need prospects for the future, an accepted destiny, confidence in ourselves. That is the responsibility of Europe ... It must have ambitions. But what ambitions?

First, defence. We have begun work on this with the shared determination to develop new capacity, to ensure that our defence industries cooperate more and to include countries such as Poland that want to play a full part in the enterprise.

A second ambition: energy. I have mentioned the climate but I could also have said that where competitiveness is concerned there is a great deal that we need to do on energy: to implement a policy both to diversify our resources and to pool our networks; to put in place a genuinely effective European energy community.

The digital economy. We must also master the technology, protect our personal data, put this mass of information to good use. That is an attractive ambition for Europe ...

And, finally, it is my wish that Europe should not necessarily have constantly to enlarge its borders but should rather talk to major countries, and Russia in particular, within the framework of a strategic relationship. ■

*Excerpts from President François Hollande's speech to the Diplomatic Corps, Élysée Palace, 17 January 2014*