



Save Timbuktu - Save peace

A country with no past can have no future.

As extremist groups destroy Timbuktu's mosques and mausoleums and threaten the manuscripts conserved in this city - irreplaceable heritage of Islam and the world - Sahel's future is being played out.

This totalitarian act is a crime against Africa. A crime against thought. A crime against the very idea of humanity.

This is a global threat. Indifference is not possible. Should a handful of extremists manage to impose their law in this area that is fighting to maintain its fragile balance, they will destabilize all Sahel countries. The consequences will be fatal, first for the local population and then for all the partners of these countries, with Mali's neighbours and Europe leading the list.

The fight against terrorism and extremism is taking place now, in Timbuktu. They are struggling for humanism, for peace. They are battling for tolerance and respect.

The time for action is now.

The United Nations Security Council has adopted a resolution presented by France, expressing support for ECOWAS and the African Union's mediation efforts to restore constitutional order. This is a first step. More must be done. Mali must not be abandoned to its fate.

Before all else, all legal steps to prevent the extremists' deadly goals must be implemented.

A new Marshall Plan for the Sahel must be launched. The security crisis is sadly pushing aside the dramatic food crisis that has affected the entire region for three years now.

These crises, beyond the present emergency that requires immediate responses, are certainly preludes to even bigger crises, for Africa's population will double by 2050, representing 22% of the world's population.

Africans are resolving their debt crisis with sacrifices to which more favored populations would never have agreed. For the past decade, the continent has once again enjoyed strong and sustained growth. An educated and enterprising middle class is emerging. Today, African youths are entrusted with the hopes of an entire continent. We can choose to help these nations grow and to encourage the world to finally commit to developing equitable, shared growth, or we can choose to disappoint the continent at the risk of the greatest perils.

Africa is not asking for charity but for justice. We are appealing to the international community's sense of responsibility and unity to confront this crisis; we are calling on countries that have traditionally been involved in Africa as well as on emerging powers. Africa's failure will be our collective failure. Should we forget this fact today, Africa's youth will remind us tomorrow.

Jacques Chirac, Former President of the French Republic, President of the Foundation Chirac*

Abdou Diouf, Former President of the Republic of Senegal, Secretary general of La Francophonie, member of the Honor committee of the Foundation Chirac

Imam **Muhammad Ashafa Nurayn** and Pastor **James Movel Wuye**, Laureates of the 2009 Foundation Chirac Prize for Conflict Prevention, founders of the Interfaith Mediation Center (Nigeria)



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Marguerite Barankitse, Laureate of the 2011 Foundation Chirac Prize for Conflict Prevention, founder of Maison Shalom (Burundi)

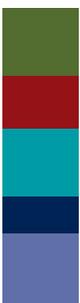
Lakhdar Brahimi, Laureate of the 2010 Foundation Chirac Special Jury Prize for Conflict Prevention, Former Special Representative of the United Nations' Secretary General

Mario Giro, Laureate of the 2010 Foundation Chirac Prize for Conflict Prevention, Head of International Relations within the Community of Sant'Egidio

Park Jae Kyu, Laureate of the 2009 Foundation Chirac Special Jury Prize for Conflict Prevention, Former Minister of Unification of the Republic of Korea, President of Kyungnam University

Naguib Sawiris, Member of the partners committee of the Foundation Chirac, Executive Chairman of Orascom Telecom Media and Technology Holding S.A.E

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