



Letter from M. Jacques CHIRAC, President of the Republic, to M. Mathieu KEREKOU, President of Benin

Paris, 28 March 2006

President Kerekou, Dear Mathieu,

As your mandate draws to a close, I want to extend my very sincere congratulations to you for your achievements as leader of Benin over these past ten years and assure you of my very sincere friendship.

You were a trail-blazer by initiating the first national conference in Africa. Its debates were to spawn the democratic regime which has allowed Benin often to be cited as an example of the model of successful democratization on the continent.

Elected in 1996, then re-elected in 2001, you succeeded in maintaining your country's national unity, law and order and stability at a time when the region was seeing more and more flashpoints of tension.

Your unwavering commitment to the service of peace has particularly been demonstrated by your country's participation in the peacekeeping operations in the region and in a recent past by Benin's extremely positive activity at the United Nations Security Council.

You have also been the indefatigable champion of the world's poorest countries in the international organizations and the brilliant spokesman of the African cotton-producing countries.

Your name, President Kerekou, will remain in people's memories, alongside those of the forgers of your continent's history, as that of an ardent defender of the humanist values which we share particularly within La Francophonie [international Francophone organization].

During your last visit to France, you said that it was not a farewell visit. You were right, since you will always be welcome in our country where I hope to see you again in the near future.

(complementary close, with handwritten addition).

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