

## M. of Villepin a "different phase" in the Franco-American relations announces

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**At the time of the conference with UNO on Liberia, the Foreign Minister met his American counterpart, Colin Powell. The sending of blue helmets in Côte.d'ivoire was discussed.**

**New York (the United Nations)** *of our corresponding*

The French Minister for the Foreign Affairs, Dominique de Villepin, took part, Friday February 6 in New York, an international conference on Liberia, organized by the American government, UNO and the World Bank. The objective of the meeting was to collect promises of gifts of 500 million dollars for this country of West Africa which leaves fourteen years a civil war having made 200 000 died. Liberia is "*on the way of the hope*" , summarized Kofi Annan.

M. of Villepin recalled that France intended to contribute, to height of 25 million euros, with the rebuilding of Liberia and that it "*had immediately accepted*" , September 19, 2003, the sending by the Security Council of 15 000 blue helmets one month after the departure of Charles Taylor. It announced that France was also going to resolve a sum of 1 million euros, of which the half will be used to finance projects in favour of the moved populations and the children soldiers, "*of coordination with equivalent projects carried out in Côte.d'ivoire, on the other side of the border*" , has it says.

The minister stressed that the creation of a mission of maintenance of peace in Côte.d'ivoire was "*essential*". "*There is urgency, because we enter the final phase of the agreements of Linas-Marcoussis, has he says. It is now necessary to carry out disarmament and to prepare the elections*" .

*"Let us be quite conscious of the importance of acting in time, without waiting until the crises degenerate into chaos. Let us be also conscious that only a regional approach, integrated, coordinated by the United Nations, can effectively treat the crises on the African continent, that it*

*is about West Africa, of the horn of Africa or the area of the Large Lakes "*, it added.

After the conference, M. of Villepin had a half an hour private conversation with its American counterpart Colin Powell, follow-up of a working lunch. The principal tackled subjects were the Côte.d'ivoire, the possible implication of NATO in Iraq, Afghanistan, the initiatives against the proliferation and, also, the file of the establishment of the research center on controlled nuclear fusion ITER.

## **THE IRAQI CALENDAR**

At the time of a press conference, it indicated that France and the United States had entered a *"phase different"* from their relations. *"We work together"* , it underlined. Brought to comment on the presentation, one year before, by M. Powell, of the evidence of the American government against Iraq, M. of Villepin answered: *"I think that my colleague and friendly Colin Powell, when it came in front of the Security Council, presented a position in which it believed, with knowledge that it had at the time."*

On the Côte.d'ivoire, the French minister declared himself *"trustful"* that Washington, which reserved its decision until now, would end up approving the sending of blue helmets *"in a few weeks"* . *"I think that the United States includes/understands the situation perfectly and regards as us that something must be done"* , it has says. Kofi Annan as hoped as the United States *"would come on board in the rather near future"*. The secretariat works with a formula which would allow a progressive spreading out of the deployment of the troops to limit the cost of the mission. Manpower envisaged was of 6 200 men.

On Iraq, M. from Villepin reviewed the ideas which circulate to widen the legitimacy of the future Iraqi government. It indicated its full support for the team of electoral experts sent by Kofi Annan in Baghdad to try to find a solution with the disagreement on the elections. The team left New York Thursday. M. Annan again implied that the date of June 30 fixed by Washington for the transfer of sovereignty to the Iraqis was flexible. If all the parts concerned wish a change, *"I do not see how we could resist it"* , has it says.

## **Corine Lesnes**

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