

In a statement posted on the NATO website Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said:

"I was very pleased to hear President Sarkozy's remarks at the close of the major conference organized today by the Fondation pour la recherche stratégique (FRS). It is now of course up to the French Parliament to state its position, but the President has clearly indicated that the process that should lead France to resume its full place has reached its final stage.

I warmly welcome the French President's choice. His move represents both the culmination of a steady rapprochement with NATO on France's part over the last 15 years and a new boost to relations between France and the Alliance just a few weeks away from the Strasbourg/Kehl Summit, at which NATO will face strategic decisions about its future. France has always been an important ally within NATO; its current contribution to operations and missions is crucial. Its full participation in all the civil and military decision-making and planning processes cannot but strengthen the Alliance further, in my view. I think it will also open up new prospects for a more solid, confident and complementary relationship between NATO and the EU.

President Sarkozy said that, as soon as the outcome of next week's parliamentary debate was known, he would write to all the Allies to inform them of his decision. As Secretary General, and guardian of the Organization's procedures, I shall make sure that all steps are taken to ensure implementation of the French decision".