

(Translated from the original in French)

February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2006

**Speech given by Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres, Minister of Culture and Communication, on occasion of the announcement of the Dan David Prize Laureates and of the signing of the agreement**

Dear Friends,

I am especially proud and pleased to welcome you here today, to the Ministry of Culture and Communication, for the signing of a partnership agreement with the Dan David Foundation, named after its illustrious founder, whom I wish to greet and warmly thank for his presence.

“Pascal wrote; the whole sequence of men, during the long succession of centuries, has to be considered as a single man, that always subsists and is continuously learning.” There are exceptional men whose talent, intelligence, courage, and excellence contribute every day towards opening new doors to humanity, men who, giving meaning to what Pascal wrote, reconcile with their endeavours, with their works and with their talents, the past, the present and the future, by expanding the horizons of what it means to be human.

The Dan David Prize generously rewards, since 2001, these visionaries, who enable all of humanity to make great strides in the fields of knowledge – artistic, cultural and scientific – within the three time dimensions, from archaeology to the latest discoveries in biomedical sciences.

France, the land of humanism, of enlightenment and reason; the nation of Rousseau, who after Pascal celebrated the aspiring to human perfection; also the nation of Condorcet, who in his time created an historical image of the progress of the human spirit, convinced that “the human race is walking with a firm and sure step on the road of truth, virtue and happiness”; France, the nation of tolerance, of respect towards others; France, concerned, watchful, active and mobilised to face the danger of the resurgence of hatred, of violence and of anti-Semitism; France, united in this battle, today more than ever; France in mourning, as it showed yesterday, rendering a national homage, at the Victoire Synagogue in Paris, to the memory of Ilan Halimi.

As I was saying, France is especially proud to welcome, every two years, this remarkable endeavour that puts in the spotlight the expansion of the frontiers of human knowledge.

The agreement we are about to sign, states that the Foundation prizes will be awarded, alternating every year, in Tel Aviv and in Paris.

What more prestigious and solemn setting could we offer this ceremony than the National Opera of Paris, symbol of the radiance and beauty of our country, backdrop for encounters and discoveries, witness to the richness of a universal inheritance and the vitality of contemporary creation, privileged setting for the dialogue between epochs, between generations, between cultures?

France also feels deeply committed to scientific culture, an essential dimension of human progress, which it illustrates not only through the talents of its researchers and of its teachers and students, but also through its actions and policies such as the opening to the largest of publics of its numerous prestigious institutions; amongst these stands the Cité, Museum of Sciences and of Industry, as well as numerous associations, present everywhere; I am notably thinking of “La main à la pate”, launched in 1996 by Professor Georges Charpak, who received the Nobel Prize for Physics, one year after you did, and of the Science Academy, of which you, dear Pierre-Gilles de Gennes, are a member.

I am especially proud and pleased that the Cité is associated with the procedure of selection of candidates of the Dan David Prize and that its capability will allow it to ensure the promotion of laureates from amongst the largest of publics.

I am pleased that, on this occasion, a reinforced cooperation can be developed with the University of Tel Aviv, in the right line of the objectives that were fixed in 2002 by the high-level Franco-Israeli group co-presided by Professor David Khayat and the Ambassador Yehouda Lancry, to favour reciprocal knowledge and exchange between our two countries, in the domains of economic, cultural, academic and scientific life.

I wish to greet the three high personalities of the art world, of the press world and of the science world, who will later on announce the Laureates of this year's Dan David Prize: Gérard Mortier, for the Prize designated to reward the works that have enriched the knowledge of the Past, Alain de Pouzilhac, for the Prize rewarding the works contributing to the knowledge of today's society, Pierre-Gilles de Gennes, for the Prize rewarding the works in the promising domains for the creation of the future.

I would also like to render homage to the Dan David Foundation, to the illustrious members of its administration board and to its entire team, for their exemplary activity at the service of the making of a better world.

I wish finally, dear Dan David, to express my admiration for you. You are an authentic philanthropist, an infallible ambassador of universal values and you have understood, better than anyone, that, in this formidable adventure of mankind that unites us one to the other, as Saint Exupéry wrote; “each one, on his own, is responsible for all”.

Finally I wish to thank all of you for having participated in this moment, which marks the participation of the Ministry of Culture and Communication in this noble enterprise.

Thank you.