

**MESSAGE FROM MR JEAN-MARC TODESCHINI
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR VETERANS AFFAIRS AND MEMORY
WORLD VETERANS FEDERATION 28TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

Ladies and gentlemen,

I wanted to take the opportunity of this meeting to send a message to you via your President Mr. Jacques Goujat.

This message comes at a very important time in the veteran world. A generation is currently leaving us, proudly passing the torch on to women and men who fought beyond our borders for values which the World Veterans Federation holds close: the preservation of peace and respect for human rights.

This indefectible link between generations of veterans has been created by you over time: by putting yourself forward to serve your country, by making values of peace, freedom and justice the driving force of your commitments, by remaining faithful to the sacrifices of your elders and continuing to honour the memory of your fallen comrades.

This is why as soon as I took up my functions I wanted to maintain and reinforce the work for recognition and reparation with regard to women and men engaged in external operations. I have met them, in Central African Republic for example, where I saw the extent of their commitment. I spoke with soldiers who were wounded, in their flesh and in their souls, as well as with the families of victims. The accompaniment of the wounded and their families is, for the Minister of Defence, Jean-Yves Le Drian and myself, more than a desire, it is a duty. It is our responsibility. I would like to reaffirm before all of you the commitment of our minister in this regard.

Recognition and reparation are today taking on a new form with the introduction on 1 October this year of the veterans card for soldiers with at least 4 months of active service. On that day, alongside the Minister, I will hand over the very first card. It is a great pride for the Minister and myself to express, on behalf of the entire Nation, the recognition due to these veterans. A recognition that unites generations in the same homage, thus reinforcing intergenerational solidarity, which is essential to society as a whole.

Ladies and gentlemen, the fact that your Assembly is meeting today in Poland, and last time met in Jordan reminds us that this solidarity is also expressed at the international level.

It unites our soldiers from all countries, engaged in Africa and in the Middle East, in the same way that 70 years ago it united those who came from the world over to liberate Europe from Nazism, to whom we have paid homage throughout the last two years.

It also unites the participants in the Walk for Peace which you organise each 21 September the world over, to remind us that no geographical border can stop the desire for peace and freedom which drives the world.

Dear members of the World Veterans Federation, you are an ideal example of this.