



ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

Opening of the e-G8 Forum

The Tuileries Gardens (Paris) – Tuesday, 24 May 2011

Ladies and Gentlemen,

History always remembers those places where, at a given point in time, all creative forces of an era seem to want to converge.

And it is in the hope that Paris would become the capital of the Internet for a few days that I wanted to bring you here together, just before the G8 Summit.

This is an important moment because to my knowledge it is the first time that all those who, with their talent and ingenuity, helped change the world, or I should say, make us change the world, are meeting in one and the same place.

France and the G8 have indeed the honour to welcome the men and women whose names are now associated with the emergence of a new form of civilization.

If we are able to listen to each other, speak to each other and understand each other, I am strongly convinced that we will be able to give this G8 a historic dimension, so that our era becomes fully self-aware and moves beyond the tremendous individual adventures to become a part of collective history.

Our world has already experienced two different globalizations.

From the first one, that of great discoveries, we inherited a complete world, a world which Magellan could circumnavigate, a world that could be explored and charted.

From the second one, that of industrial revolutions, we inherited a space that was not only complete, but domesticated, and at times subjugated.

With the third globalization, that in which you both play a role and are promoting, you have changed the way the world sees itself.

You have changed the notion of space because the Internet not only got rid of the distance separating people but also opened up a virtual world that is, by definition, limitless.
A world in which everyone can make contact with everyone else.
A world in which everyone can create their own territory, their own community, even their own society.

You have changed the notion of time, getting rid of the very concept of something happening over a period of time, making everything immediate, giving everyone the possibility of reaching others and accessing information instantly, and in short, making anything possible.

You have even changed how we see history because transparency, even if at times it can be contested, both in its method and its effects, has imposed itself on countries.
You have changed our relationship with things and objects with the single phenomenon of “dematerialization”.
You have changed the very notion of knowledge and have made it possible for everyone to access all knowledge and not only access, but contribute to this knowledge. The dream of a universal library that would include knowledge from all over the world, this dream that is old as time itself, has now become a reality for millions of Internet users.

In just a few years, you have rocked the very foundations of the world economy in which you now play a major role.

You have changed the world.
For me, you have changed the world, just as Columbus and Galileo did.
You have changed the world, just as Newton and Edison did.
You have changed the world with the imagination of inventors and the boldness of entrepreneurs.

Unique in history, this total revolution has been immediately and irrevocably global.
Unique in history, this revolution does not belong to anybody, it does not have a flag, it does not have a slogan: this revolution is a common good.
Unique in history, this revolution has occurred without violence.
The discovery of the New World brought about the total destruction of American Indian civilizations.
The global revolution that you incarnate is a peaceful one. It did not emerge on battlefields but on university campuses.

It arose from the miraculous combination of science and culture, and the determination to acquire knowledge and the determination to transmit it.

With regard to the origins of your sector, legend has it that Google was created in a garage: the thing I remember most is that Google was born in a university library.
The imaginary world of Hollywood wanted Facebook to be seen as the result of a failed love affair: we’d like to see many more like that. The thing I remember most is that Facebook was created at a top ranking university campus.

This revolution that went so far as to change our perception of time and space has played a decisive role in other revolutions. In Tunisia and Egypt alike, mere individuals were able to overturn a power that was completely discredited by building virtual barricades and organizing very real rallies.
Peoples in Arab countries thus showed the world that the Internet does not belong to States. International opinion was able to see that the Internet had become, for freedom of speech, a medium for expressing unprecedented power.

Like any revolution, the technological and cultural revolution you began holds promise. Huge promise. Promise that is commensurate with the considerable progress you incarnate.

Now that this revolution has reached the first stage in its maturity, it should not forget the promise of its origins.

If you have designed tools that are now your own, it is because you dreamed of a world that would be more open.

If you have built social networks that currently connect millions of men and women, it is because you dreamed of a world that would be more socially minded.

If you have given utopia concrete expression, it is because you have faith in humankind and its future.

If you have achieved worldwide success so swiftly, it is because this promise reflects universal values.

Your work should thus be considered historic and help drive civilization.

And that is the importance of your responsibility, because you do have a responsibility.

Our responsibility, as Heads of State and Government, is no less important. We must support a revolution that was born at the heart of civil society for civil society and that has a direct impact on the life of States. Because if technology is neutral and must remain so, we have clearly seen that the ways the Internet is used are not.

Today, discussing and shaping the Internet is a real historic responsibility and this responsibility can only be shared, by you and us.

The idea is for the G8 States, which include some of the most powerful countries in the world, to recognize the role that is now yours in the course of history. We would like to hear about your expertise, because we have things to learn. We have things to understand. Just like individuals and companies, States do not want to miss an opportunity for progress that you have created and that you incarnate.

How can we use the Internet to bolster democracy, social dialogue and solidarity? How can we use the Internet to improve the way States function? How can we inject this spirit of innovation and enterprise which is characteristic of your sector into States?

Also the States we represent need to make it known that the world you represent is not a parallel universe, free of legal and moral rules and more generally all the basis principles that govern society in democratic countries.

Now that the Internet is an integral part of most people's lives, it would be contradictory to exclude governments from this huge forum. Nobody could nor should forget that these governments are the only legitimate representatives of the will of the people in our democracies. To forget this is to run the risk of democratic chaos and hence anarchy. To forget this would be to confuse populism with democracy of opinion.

Juxtaposed individual wishes have never constituted the will of the people.

A social contract cannot be drawn up by simply lumping together individual aspirations.

States and Governments have also learned from history, and I am speaking to you on behalf of the country that drew up the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen.

So, ladies and gentlemen, be loyal to the promise of the revolution that you began, as France has sought to be loyal to hers for over two centuries.

I know that the market has its own regulatory mechanisms but trade is never truly free if the terms of this trade are unfair.

Do not allow new barriers to be built where you have toppled the longstanding walls of the old world. Do not allow new monopolies to take root where you have overturned long-established situations that seemed unshakeable.

In giving all individuals, regardless of where they live or from where they speak, the possibility to be heard by everyone everywhere, you have provided all citizens of the world with a freedom of speech that is unprecedented in history. This outstanding leap in individual freedoms cannot be taken at the expense of the rights of others.

Do not allow the revolution you began to violate people's fundamental right to privacy and to be fully autonomous. Complete transparency, which never allows a person to rest, will sooner or later come up against the very principle of individual freedom.

Let us not forget that behind an anonymous Internet user, there is a real citizen who is evolving in a society, a culture and an organized nation to which he belongs and with laws he must abide by.

Do not forget that the sincerity of your promise will be assessed in the commitment of your companies to contribute fairly to national ecosystems.

Do not allow the revolution you began to violate the basic right of children to lives that are protected from the moral turpitude of certain adults.

Do not allow the revolution you began to be a vehicle for maliciousness, unobstructed and unrestricted. Do not allow this revolution become an instrument in the hands of those who wish to jeopardize our security and in doing so, our freedom and our integrity.

You have allowed everyone, with the mere magic of the Web, to access all the cultural treasures of the world in a simple click. It would be something of a paradox if the Web contributed to draining them over time.

The immense cultural wealth that provides our civilizations with such beauty is a product of the creative forces of our artists, authors and thinkers. Basically, it is the product of all those who work on enchanting the world.

Yet these creative forces are fragile because when creative minds are deprived of the fruit of their talents, they are not just ruined, what's worse, they lose their independence, they will be required to pawn their freedom.

I'm telling you this with a man in mind, a Frenchman who died over two centuries ago, who with a single play brought down a nearly one-thousand-year-old monarchy, a man who also, with Lafayette, was one of the first defenders of American Independence!

This man was like you because, starting with nothing but his intelligence, he overturned an order that was believed to be immovable and eternal. This man was Beaumarchais. This same man invented the principle of copyright. He went one step further than giving authors ownership rights of their works, he ensured their independence, he offered them freedom.

I know and I understand that our "French" idea of copyright is not the same as in the United States and other countries.

I simply mean that our commitment to universal principles, those that both the U.S. Constitution and the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen lay down: nobody can have his ideas, work, imagination and intellectual property expropriated without this being punished.

What I would like to express here is that each of you should be able to be heard because before being entrepreneurs you are creators. It is under this copyright law for creative work that you have been able to found companies that have become empires. These algorithms that constitute your power, this continual innovation that constitutes your strength, this technology that is changing the world, are your property and nobody can contest that. Each of you, each of us, can therefore understand that writers, directors, musicians and actors can have the same rights.

This copyright law for creative work enabling artists to receive fair payment for their ideas and their talents, is also valid for each of the States we represent.
States invest in training of those who then join your companies.

States invest in the technical and technological infrastructure that provides transport for the services and content that are circulated on the Web.

States would like to engage in dialogue with you so that a balanced way forward can be found one day that is mindful of your interests, those of Internet users that give you overwhelming support every day and those lastly of citizens and taxpayers of every nation who also have rights.

We are emerging from a terrible crisis, resulting from the blindness of financial powers who have lost sight of what was important to sacrifice everything for money.
These powers that did not want to be accountable to people and the powers that wanted to avoid dialogue with elected governments that have the interest of the people in mind.

It is simply a call for collective responsibility that I am issuing here. A call for responsibility and a call for common sense.

We believe in the same values. I am therefore convinced that a way forward is possible. A way forward that will enable the world you created and the world we have inherited to work alongside each other in the interest of a world that has become global, which is largely thanks to you.

So let us begin together this crucial dialogue. Let us open and build this new forum.

I would like to thank you because when I had the idea for this forum, at first everyone told me that it was a bad idea, except Maurice Levy, when I asked him to be in charge of organizing it. First my fellow Heads of State and Government, who told me yet again, "you take too many risks". I personally think that the worst risk is not taking any; the worst risk is that of not speaking to each other. And I think that we never take risks when we call on the intelligence of people, from your world, who have said to themselves "what can we do with Heads of State and Government?" I think that we have a lot to accomplish together and I'll be very happy Thursday if a delegation made up of some of the participants here today could engage in dialogue with my fellow Heads of State and Government. We need this dialogue, we need to understand your expectations, your aspirations, your needs. And you need to hear our limitations, our red lines, the problems we shoulder in the name of the general interest of our societies. I am so pleased to welcome you here in Paris today and would be even more pleased if this forum could be held every year prior to the G8 Summit so that we have a clear idea of where you are in your progress and so that you know what we are thinking.

Thank you.