
**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC AT THE
CONFERENCE OF AMBASSADORS**

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Ministers,
Prime Ministers,
Vice-President of the Conseil d'État,
Members of Parliament,
Armed Forces Chief of Staff,
Ambassadors,
Directors,
Esteemed ladies and gentlemen,
Dear friends,

I am pleased to be here with you today, at the start of this week of work in Paris, and under the authority of the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Catherina Colonna, the Minister Delegate for Foreign Trade, Olivier Becht, the Minister of State for Europe, Laurence Boone and the Minister of State for Development, Francophonie and International Partnerships, Chrysoula Zacharopoulou. Each one of you are committed to serving the people of France, for which I thank you.

There are two difficulties with delivering this speech and I find they increase each year. First, it is clear that it is always too long, and as I read it over, I notice that certain regions or areas have not been mentioned, so it is always a question of compromise, trying to be as thorough as possible while at the same time remaining bearable for those listening to it.

The second difficulty is that with each passing year, there are two risks. The first is being repetitious. I will try not to fall into that trap too much today, but please forgive me if I do. The second, which is more serious, is contradicting myself. I have also tried to avoid this pitfall, although circumstances do sometimes change and mean that past commitments have to be re-examined.

In any case, one thing that is certain and does not change is that your commitment, the diplomacy which you represent, is of great importance to our country. And the people of France have used their energy and talent to ensure that our country remains the leading destination for foreign investment in Europe, a country of innovation, of rapid transition towards carbon neutrality, a major player in the security of Europe and the world, an essential partner for development and international solidarity.

All of that is the fruit of your commitment and work against an increasingly difficult backdrop. And before getting to the core issues, I wanted to start by saying a few words about this backdrop, which has, in essence, become more difficult since my last speech before you. But I believe that the fundamentals of this turbulent, increasingly fragmented world, remain. The resources we have built to try to set out four priorities, most of which continue on from what we have been doing in recent years.

I believe that the international situation is becoming more complicated and is at risk of weakening the West and more specifically, our Europe. We must be clear-sighted, without being overly pessimistic. First, there is a dilution of our population, of our wealth produced, of our share in world trade. This is all the more true since the crisis in 2008-2010. It is the result of major international powers coming to the fore. It was exacerbated by the energy crisis, as our Europe does not produce fossil fuels, and at least in the short term this consolidates the strategies we are following.

Then, there is a gradual challenging of our international order, its principles, its various forms of organization. It must be said that the West played and is still playing a prominent role, first with the emergence of the war, including on European soil, which I will return to shortly. There are also the politics of the existing situation which, from the borders of Europe to the continents of Africa and Asia, are increasingly influential.

We witness a type of rise in the policy of resentment, fuelled by a reinvented or fictional anti-colonialism and by instrumentalized anti-Western sentiment, the denunciation of a double standard which we have sometimes encouraged - it must be said - by adjusting international law to what we imagined and by forgetting that the sovereignty of peoples was one of the prerequisites for our action, and increasing the challenging of the United Nations Security Council and many of our international organizations. We cannot ignore this.

From the International Monetary Fund to the World Bank and beyond, more and more countries, in an increasingly direct manner, believe that these structures have less and less legitimacy to impose any rule, that they were created in a world in which these countries did not exist, which is true, that they represent an old order, or that they do not reflect today's geopolitical reality, and even less so the current demographic and sometimes even military reality.

This is reflected, without having to exaggerate reality, by symptoms such as those which we saw in recent days with an attempt to expand the BRICS format. We must remain clear about the reality. Nevertheless, this shows a will to bring about an alternative order, in any case something which would replace what we have up to now called an international order, which is seen as too Western, or at least as having less legitimate rules.

All this against a backdrop of increasingly tense Chinese-US relations, which, it must be said, are also disrupting the international order, as in recent months this has led to a clear challenging of our international trade order; the world's two leading trading powers, in effect choosing to

ignore the established trade rules, which is a new phenomenon, but which cannot be completely ignored. A new form of protectionism is gaining ground, it has arrived.

All of this leads to the risk of a divided world, a weakening of the rules-based world order, a weakening of the democratic ideal. We can see it in the rise of illiberalism, and within our existing cooperation and partnership mechanisms. So even as we are currently confronted with increasingly global challenges requiring greater coordination, whether they involve peace and stability, the climate, biodiversity, the fight against poverty for development, but also artificial intelligence and digital technology, or the fight against tax avoidance.

Each of these issues requires a more cooperative and more established international order. That is the paradox we are currently living through. And our strategy must strive to be clear-sighted and confront this new order, but also provide it with solid responses. So in this context, we must have quite a simple diplomacy which involves pursuing our interests. And from that starting point: our security, our economic, technological, diplomatic and cultural interests.

We must do so by also defending our principles and it is what sometimes sets us apart from other countries. It is a certain aspiration for universality and thus, in that regard, the defence of human rights, human dignity, partnership with humanitarian actors, defence of international law and respect for the sovereignty of the people. And then, this diplomacy must be built on a path of independence, meaning that while we have allies, while we belong to solid organizations like our Europe, we want to speak with everyone and build trust-based diplomacy, a diplomacy of balances in the plural and not one of equidistance, through which we can build concrete solutions to the challenges I raised and to this fragmentation underway.

To do so, we have built up resources, particularly in recent years and even more so in recent months. I would like to thank the administrations, but also the Members of Parliament here today, as we have made strong choices which have been in line with the international situation. As I said in this very place a year ago, we have reinvested in our diplomacy, from this year we have ended almost three decades of staff cuts, and we will continue in this vein. I said the same thing when I visited the Quai d'Orsay on 16 March last. We must "re-arm" our diplomacy. By doing this, we restored resources but we also took on new issues such as soft power, communication and renewed working methods, and we facilitated interdisciplinarity and combining areas of expertise. But I don't want to repeat what I said on 16 March, you can read that speech at your leisure.

Next, we also strengthened our solidarity investment. By allocating more resources, our official development assistance rose to a record level of 0.55% of national gross revenue in 2023, as we had pledged in 2017 and as the law, adopted during the previous five-year term, had set out. It now enables France to be the world's fourth-largest net contributor in terms of solidarity investment. At the same time, we overhauled our French Development Agency.

The *Cité du développement* is being prepared and rolled out. The Presidential Council for Solidarity Investment has made clear decisions in this area. We set up a laboratory, new experimentation methods, another form of roll-out on the ground, making our geographical

priorities less rigid to ensure much more flexibility and serve a policy of more concrete partnerships and solidarity investments, here too with real investment.

Furthermore, at the same time, we set up a military tool which is even more credible - our armed forces have always been strong and solid - through the two military programming laws, both being based on solid strategic exercises. After these two programming laws, we will have doubled our army's budget, which is unprecedented in modern times. We will have doubled it by also confronting risks and new conflicts, including cybersecurity, space, the high seas, and by examining new areas of conflict, but by strengthening our armies' strong points, consolidating a comprehensive model and independence and by making the French army the most effective army in Europe, which is our goal. I welcome the commitment of our troops, but also the close partnership between our troops and our diplomats in that regard.

That said, and to develop the coherence of these investments and our action in the complex context which I was mentioning, I would like to concentrate on 4 main themes.

First, to properly and effectively defend our interests, we must have a security and stability policy in the new context, particularly the war in Ukraine. Then, I would like to get back to our European independence strategy and pursuing our economic, technological and strategic interests. Next, in your presence, I would like to expand on the fact that France, against this backdrop, must seek to be a trusted partner, both geographically and to overhaul the international governance. I would like to end with a few words on our outreach and soft power policy in line with this strategy. As you can see, all of this is in line with what I have said to you over the past few years, and the action you are conducting with great enthusiasm.

But I must also mention the challenges facing us. First, as I mentioned earlier on, I want to say that I will not cover all geographical areas. That would be impossible, and in the months ahead I will have the opportunity to address further regions. But before entering into these four themes, I would once more like to specifically thank you, particularly those of you who have had to deal with critical situations. In recent months, France and its diplomats have had to face particularly difficult situations in certain countries, such as in Sudan, where France led the way, including in evacuating our own nationals and those of our partners, or in Niger at this very moment. I commend your colleagues who are watching us from their diplomatic posts. You have reminded us that being a diplomat is a commitment which is sometimes risky, and which requires a sense of responsibility which you have always shown in these difficult situations. In previous years, we demonstrated this in Afghanistan and other countries, and I think that now is a good time to remember this in the current situation, and other situations which will arise.

I mentioned Afghanistan, but naturally I could also mention Ukraine and several other theatres of operation. As I said, security and stability above all else. It is clear that our collective security and that of France and its allies, its European partners, has been challenged by Russia's aggression against Ukraine. I discussed this issue in front of you on several occasions last year, and again in recent months, particularly in Vilnius. We must always remember that this is a unique conflict. First and foremost, it is based on the fact that war has returned to Europe. And

second, it is because it has taken place blatantly, run roughshod over and violated the sovereignty of the people and territorial integrity of a European state. And in this way, it violates international law. It has worsened with multiple war crimes, attacks on civilian populations and scenes we have witnessed and on which we are working via cooperation from our exemplary judges, police, and gendarmes. Next, because it involves a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, and what's more, a nuclear power. All of this changes the terms for effective diplomacy and of course the nature of political and military commitment.

In the face of this, I believe that France, Europe and the allies have responded appropriately. First, they provided an immediate, united and effective response. And I stress this even more because it was the result of French engagement, as France held the Presidency of the Council of the EU when the war started. And I think that what was achieved by our diplomacy was particularly useful, and provided a significant element of surprise. Europeans did not become divided, they reacted quickly and appropriately: the sanctions policy, with multiple sanctions packages against Russia to reduce its ability to support the war effort over the long term; a support policy for Ukraine, with humanitarian, economic and military support which has continued with the commitments made in Vilnius by France, the Europeans and Europe's allies. If we add together the humanitarian, civil support and military investments in Ukraine, it is the European Union which provides it with the most support. I say this while thanking our American allies for their vital support, but also recalling the strong European support.

Then, by ensuring we have no policy of escalation. And this set the boundaries of our support, i.e. we have always been careful not to become directly engaged in a conflict with Russia, its territory and its population, which is clearly a difficulty. And all that while at the same time avoiding partition of the world and preparing for the future. And I believe that this has been the right policy over the past 18 months. Avoiding partition of the world is a simple concept, meaning that we are preventing a narrative saying that "it is your war, you Europeans; we are not involved". For all the reasons I have set out, this war is one which affects the entire world, because it impacts our ability to uphold international law, our principles and in particular the integrity of our borders.

So it was essential to continue working within all international forums so that this war remains at the forefront of our concerns, with clear condemnation and diplomatic action from all parties, and avoiding division. And there too, I want to pay tribute to the work achieved in all diplomatic posts, which must continue via resolutions at the United Nations General Assembly, where at the same time, we have gradually reduced the number of votes aligned with Russia, sometimes by opting out or even abstaining.

We must continue to convince and explain, and future meetings will be key in this regard. But above all, as we did on the sidelines of the G7 in Hiroshima, we must allow Ukraine itself to convince all the partners alongside us. And French diplomacy is also a way to support Ukrainian diplomacy and advocacy so that, when we speak about peace, a word which appears in every proposal throughout the world, this peace is understood in the same way by everyone. It cannot mean a ceasefire which recognizes the existing situation, because that would be preparing for a

future war, or worse. But it is a sustainable peace, i.e. one which respects the sovereignty of the Ukrainian people and international law. And in this order, as has been done in recent months by bringing all the regions of the planet closer together, we can build a viable situation over the long term. I believe that in so doing, we can consolidate our efforts and avoid partition of the world.

France's work was also reflected by special commitment to the International Atomic Energy Agency to monitor the risk of proliferation. The months ahead will continue to be based around these themes. And we must continue to make major efforts to avoid division of the international order around this conflict, to maintain our support and through time, to acknowledge the permanent nature of support for Ukraine and its resistance and war efforts, and to prepare this sustainable peace. We will continue this work through various essential diplomatic efforts. France will continue to work alongside short-term humanitarian action, as we did when welcoming refugees.

I want to express my thanks for all the work done in France by the Ministry of the Interior and all the relevant ministries on the issue, and the humanitarian work carried out in Ukraine to support them, and we will continue the preparatory and rebuilding work which is also essential. But this lasting peace and stability which we must prepare also involves work for us Europeans. I also wanted some input. I have discussed this issue in greater detail and I can direct you to my speech in Bratislava at the GLOBSEC Conference on the consequences of the length of the war in Ukraine for our security architecture and Europe's thought process, stability and security.

But it is very clear that there will be a prewar and postwar period as regards Ukraine. And what I think is essential is to include in our diplomatic action and our work the consequences of this war for preparing the lasting peace which I mentioned.

First, we have to prepare for it and to do so as a member of NATO. That is what we have been doing as strong allies since day one. The clearest evidence of this, which must be upheld everywhere, is that we were the first country to deploy quickly and effectively on NATO's eastern front. A few days into the conflict, France deployed in Romania, providing reassurance on the eastern flank. That is the strength of our model. And with regard to the Baltic States, we also have continued to step up our involvement in NATO missions and air policing. We have stepped up the work of our defence industries and we must continue this essential work for a long-term war economy for as long as the war lasts. This also answers to a new commitment of adapting our industry; our French and European industrial, technological and defence bases.

As you can see, we must work within NATO to achieve increased European involvement. This began in 2019. I have discussed this on several occasions, but in my opinion, it is absolutely vital that this come to fruition in the months and years ahead.

The European pillar and greater European defence within NATO is not the enemy nor NATO's problem, on the contrary. This is what is reassuring about Europe, particularly for our American allies. We must take greater responsibility for our own security and the instability in our

neighbourhood. This is what the Americans have requested as part of burden-sharing. This is what is essential for us. In doing so, we must strengthen our technological and military independence, increase production, conduct further standardization for the European defence industry and make our defence more European-orientated.

All this means leaving a form of European geopolitical minority within NATO. We must view it as such and accept it. And that is also why the postwar period in Ukraine should be reflected in new treaties to govern weapons, all types of arms and military activities which are affecting Europe. We must have the will to draw up and sign these future treaties. As I recalled in December 2019, in a widely commented upon address, Europe was something of a geopolitical object, and not a subject. Everything that affected us in terms of intermediary weapons or others, affected our territory, we dealt through treaties we were not signatories to. And non-compliance by one party or termination by both affected us and yet we were, in a way, unable to do anything but voice our discontent. We must build this new international order which affects us directly via our military involvement and the military programming law is based around this strategy, as it has been designed so that France can be a framework nation for new NATO deployment coalitions, which is unprecedented.

Especially in African theatres of operation, what we have begun to do is in this regard completely unprecedented, with the Takuba Task Force in particular, and gives an idea of our plans.

We must thus continue to convince all our European partners of the need for this strategy through bilateral or European defence cooperation, through closer strategic and operational cooperation, which we have begun with the European Intervention Initiative (EI2) and which we must roll out in the coming years through new capability cooperation. In this regard, I would like to stress the importance we place on cooperation with Germany, whether with regard to future aircraft or tanks. We know that discussions are sometimes difficult and that issues are sometimes challenged. We will not compromise on the strategic nature of these partnerships, which were decided upon in this very location in July 2017 with Chancellor Merkel, but over time we must continue them and build new capability partnerships, whether in the area of space, maritime or cyberspace, as that is how we can strengthen this European defence pillar for all allies.

Beyond this framework, we must think of European stability which is not only security-based and which, in a way, is not only achieved through NATO. That is the nub of what we proposed with the European Political Community. It was a proposal from May 2022. It is an old French idea, as it was more or less what François Mitterrand proposed with the European Confederation. At the time, it did not come to fruition because Russia was involved, and it was perhaps too soon, given the historic events of the time, to so quickly propose an alliance and open partnership.

But this European Political Community proposed in May 2022, which has already had its first two meetings in Prague and Chişinău, and will hold a further one in Granada in a few weeks'

time, is a French victory, but above all a European one. It is the idea that Europe must view itself as a broad, geopolitical continent, not simply through military alliances structured by history, in a manner which in no way causes conflict with its neighbours, but to structure the themes of immigration, energy, security, innovation, connectivity, etc. and that in essence, we must build strategic intimacy, greater convergence to consolidate a geopolitical Europe. We must continue to move forward on these issues and this forum will be absolutely essential if we want to build lasting peace in Europe.

And beyond that, there is of course our European Union, which in the months ahead, and I will return to this point more specifically, will have to go through a two-fold movement which is not incompatible, but which will undoubtedly require courage and some institutional change. As Europeans, we must think both about greater integration of our policies - and I will return to this when I discuss autonomy - but we can clearly see that in the area of defence, the climate, technology, the economy, the heart of Europe needs to be more integrated if we want to face the current challenges.

If we want to be stronger, more stable, an enlargement process is underway, particularly with regard to the Western Balkans, as it is impossible to have a Europe which in a way is weakened by geopolitical instability, interference and a type of never-ending process which fuels despair and division. The risk is that we may repeat our previous error of enlargement without integration. I know all too well that in a Europe with 27 countries, it is quite complicated to move forward on essential issues. And with 32 or 35 countries, it will not be any easier, to say the least. We thus need to show a certain degree of audacity to accept more integration on certain policies, and perhaps a multiple-speed Europe. I have spoken about this already, about five years ago, and I will return to the issue in a few months' time, but it is clear that the European Union will be a pillar of this future stability and order. But as you can see, in my view, by going through NATO and the European pillar for defence, and from the political community to the European Union, there are major challenges in terms of the post-conflict period and we must think of this immediately and structure it immediately.

This will be achieved through greater geopolitical and military insights from the Europeans, a will for more autonomy, a will to preserve our union and also maintain a deepening process for members who are willing to work with us to that end; not all of them, but with the attractiveness enabled by the audacity of a few.

Obviously, this will only be worth it if, in the months and years ahead, we remain firmly committed to the doctrine, to our strategy regarding Ukraine and Russia. Russia cannot and must not win this war, as this would lead to instability in Europe and end all faith in the principles of international law. This means that for us Europeans and our allies, it will, I hope, be a significant long-term financial, diplomatic and capability investment for the years to come. We must also re-examine a number of fundamentals, as we cannot act as though this effort has not been made, but we need this consistency, as otherwise everything I have just set out would be a lot less relevant. But our security and humanitarian interests as Europeans do not end there, and I would like to say a few words about two or three issues of concern in this area.

We will continue to be vigilant about the security and political situation in the Western Balkans. In this regard, we have built a new roadmap with Germany and a new, different proposal between Serbia and Kosovo. I think that this is a good roadmap. It was supported by a European negotiator and our representative. We are thus awaiting clear renewed commitment from both parties, i.e. renewed commitment on the expected municipal elections, Serbian renewed commitment in the related institutions, recognition of municipalities in the north by the Kosovo authorities, the re-establishment of peace, and I say this because France and Germany have also made commitments and have made efforts to open up, particularly with regard to visa policy and other economic issues, which will be reviewed if there is no policy of responsibility from the two parties. But we will continue with our German partners to be extremely careful about this issue, and about everything to do with the stability of the Western Balkans.

Then, we will also continue to be active in the Caucasus, following the war in 2020 which we condemned, as you know. The current humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh is particularly worrying. In this regard, I will have the opportunity to hold discussions with Prime Minister Pashinyan and President Aliyev this week, and we will request full compliance with the Lachin humanitarian corridor and will once again take an international diplomatic initiative in this regard to step up the pressure. Nothing can justify the current humanitarian situation being experienced by the people of Nagorno-Karabakh, we will maintain our commitment. Our action enabled the creation of a European mission after the European Political Community summit in Prague, which for the first time led to a shared text signed by the two parties to recognize the 1991 borders. We will also continue to work on discussions for a peace treaty and to clarify both territorial and crossing issues, but in the very short term, the humanitarian situation remains absolutely essential.

Finally, with regard to issues of security and stability, I do not want us to lose sight of the importance and continuity of our fight against terrorism. Although we can be proud of the excellent work of our internal security services and forces, which have foiled many would-be attacks on our territory, and although the nature of terrorism has changed in recent years, we must remain extremely vigilant. And I say that with great force and clarity. We are still involved in the international coalition in the Levant and this major involvement has been welcomed, and I would like to welcome the memory of our two soldiers who were killed in Iraq in recent weeks while carrying out missions on Iraqi soil, whether they be cooperation, training, support or counter-terrorism missions. In the Levant, we must thus continue to be involved in this mission because there is no end in sight and we must step up the work we have been doing in recent years, i.e. political and military stabilization throughout the region in support of Iraq and its sovereignty. This is what we put in place at the Baghdad Conference, the third edition of which will take place at the end of November, which I will attend as always, and which will enable us to consolidate a regional agenda in support of Iraqi sovereignty. In this respect, I would like to mention that we will also increase our involvement in two specific issues in the region, without being exhaustive.

The first is Syria. As we can see, all countries in the region want to resume talks with Syria and once again include it in the various negotiating or partnership forums. Among other issues, France will have one particular concern: the fight against terrorism, and I will return to the Baghdad Conference, whether in our dialogue with Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, as I was saying, Saudi Arabia, or others. Any re-inclusion in regional forums must be upon condition of increased cooperation in the fight against terrorist organizations and groups on Syrian territory and in the region, and must remove all ambiguity, but also must include a political process enabling refugees to return to Syria with assurances of protection, recognition and political and economic security.

The second point I wanted to discuss is Iran. I welcome the progress made in recent weeks, but we know from experience not to be overly enthusiastic because agreements can be fragile and sometimes those who conclude them then terminate them, and those who sign them do not comply with them. Which means that we must remain cautious about the type of agreements that may be signed on this issue. I simply mean that with regard to Iran, first of all, France will continue to have a clear policy and will not waver, with a very firm demand that our four nationals who are being arbitrarily detained be released. Nothing justifies the detention of four French nationals in unacceptable conditions in Iranian prisons. The second thing is that we want clear and transparent supervision of nuclear activities. The return of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action is very good news if it is followed by confidence-building measures and monitored by the relevant international agency, but we must continue to manage these activities and find a path which is essential for the entire region.

The third point which I do not want to forget is also to manage regional destabilization activities which Iran has carried out in recent years. This is a crucial point for all our partners. Re-engagement must thus involve clarification of Iran's policy regarding its nearest neighbours, regarding Israel and its security, regarding Lebanon and its stability; and to that end, I want to particularly thank Jean-Yves Le Drian for his efforts at the request of myself and the Prime Minister over the past few months. One must imagine Sisyphus happy, Minister, but a political path must be found. And we must find it in the short term. But in any case, I think that one of the keys to this political solution in Lebanon will be to clarify regional interference, including that of Iran.

Finally, talking about stability, security and counter-terrorism inevitably leads me to speak about Africa. In Africa, we do not only have a security approach: I want to be very clear about that, and I will come back to it in a moment. We have a security commitment because there were terrorist risks - and there still are - and because there is a request from sovereign States for us to help them. It is within this framework that Operation Serval and Operation Barkhane were set up. And I say this emphatically because if we forget it today, if we give in to the unacceptable arguments of this outlandish alliance between the Pan-African pretenders and the neo-imperialists, it would be crazy. France intervened in 2013 because States asked us to do so, because they were simply being broken up. If France had not acted, if our troops had not been killed in action in Africa, if Serval and then Barkhane had not been set up, today we would no longer be talking about Mali, Burkina Faso or Niger. These States would no longer exist with

their current borders. I can say that with certainty. And so when I sometimes hear even from French political leaders that Barkhane was a failure, I say that you must not use the enemy's arguments because that does a disservice to everyone. You are paying a strange tribute to our troops. We must staunchly defend the legitimacy of these operations: we have gone to help our friends and partners defend their territory and fight against terrorism in their countries. Should we be criticized for that? Were we wrong to do that? Of course not. And so we must be demanding, rethink our new partnerships and not give in to any form of contemporary paternalism. Finally, we must not start undoing everything and believing that now we can no longer help a State which wants to uphold law and order in its territory on a legal basis - and it is within this framework that we took action in the region: a sovereign request, a request from ECOWAS.

We are now changing this framework, the details of which you can find in my speech here last February. Why? Because we cannot spend too long combating terrorism and because the nature of this conflict is changing. Because the very nature of terrorism is changing throughout the region, because we see an increase in ethnic tensions, because, in essence, there is a political and economic crisis taking root in the Sahel which is creating a long-term crisis, a consequence of which is new forms of terrorism. The action we took was entirely relevant but it cannot continue in the same form. It must be adapted. That is what we decided on, a few years ago, with an initial readjustment of our system, which we decided on in the beginning of the year through a policy to reorganize all of our bases, a policy of reduction and partnership. And that is what we are currently doing, and we will go even further in the coming months. Why? Because a stable presence, based on the military aspect, is an argument used by our enemies in the information battle to weaken us, whereas the core of the solution should be a political one, by African States. France cannot therefore be a substitute and the military response cannot be something that replaces the political solution. So it must be a political solution first of all. Our military presence should, in fact, be structured around partnerships requested by African countries, whether these are for training, equipment or otherwise. We are entirely rethinking the framework of this partnership, including for the military capabilities that we deliver, and the training sessions we have reopened. As part of the Military Programming Act, the minister and the Chief of Defence put forward an entirely different plan which we are going to develop further. It is essential that we continue this journey, with some new partners: Benin, to mention just one in the Gulf of Guinea region; and Kenya, with which we are building new regional operations and capitalizing on regional forces that can ensure security.

For Niger, that is exactly what we are doing. And if I may move beyond this overall doctrine to look at what we have seen this summer: this coup d'état was carried out against a democratically elected president, who came from an ethnic minority and who has carried out courageous, far-reaching economic and political reforms for the sake of his country, reforms that clarify things in practically every area. He is committed to every aspect of the international agenda, which is the agenda of the UN, and he has been held hostage at the presidential palace by the individuals behind the coup for a month now. People said that France was too involved in its support of President Bazoum. I hear the news, and sometimes read the remarks from other capitals. But what would we do if a coup d'état like that happened in Bulgaria or Romania?

Would we say: “We can’t get too involved? We’ll take a look, because the putschists have offered us a Prime Minister? OK, let’s get involved, that’s the right policy. We can’t be die-hards, this isn’t our country.” That is what the other capitals want to do.” And they’d say that democracy is an idea that is good for Africa, that there are no double standards. It is inadmissible. This is a man of integrity who was democratically elected. He is courageous – courageous because for the first time in this type of situation, at the risk of his life and that of his family, he is not stepping down. And we’re being told that the right policy today would be to forget about him. Because that has become fashionable. Because actually, we must produce locally now, even when we are dealing with putschists. And from Washington D.C., to other European capitals, I have heard voices, listened to the news, read articles explaining: “Don’t do too much, it’s getting dangerous. It’s getting dangerous.” No; we must be clear and consistent. If we aren’t, who will listen to us? In which African capital can we say that we have a policy of partnership with a leader if we cannot support them when this happens? So, I think that our policy is the right one. It is founded on the courage of President Bazoum, the commitment of our diplomats and the commitment of our ambassador on the ground. They maintain their legitimacy, despite the pressure and all of the authorities’ statements, thanks to the commitment of our domestic security forces and military personnel.

Now, we must be clear. We are not involved. We cannot give in to a narrative used by the putschists which consists in saying, “our enemy has become France.” The problem for the people of Niger today is the putschists who are endangering them, because they are abandoning the fight against terrorism, they are abandoning a policy that was economically good and they are currently losing all international financing that was enabling to exit poverty. That is the reality. If we don’t say it, courageously, who will? So, we must continue this policy determinedly, and leave behind the lies and the easy options. Our policy is simple: we do not recognize the putschists, we support a president who has not resigned, alongside whom we remain committed, and we support the diplomatic action of ECOWAS, and military action when it will make such a decision, in a partnership approach that is the one I presented in February this year. There is neither paternalism nor weakness, because otherwise we will not get anywhere. We must continue to strongly support him and I am calling on all States in the region to adopt a responsible policy, because we must be clear: if ECOWAS abandons President Bazoum, I think that all presidents in the region are fairly aware of the destiny that awaits them. And the weakness that some showed in previous coups has fuelled regional aspirations.

There is an epidemic of coups across the Sahel. But what is this founded on? The weakness of military systems and a lack of effectiveness. There is also the policy that we must conduct in support of the entire region, and I will come back to this in a moment. So I think we must be clear on this point. It is a very difficult period, and especially difficult for the people of Niger and for our forward posts, but we must avoid any double standards in that respect too, and remain committed to our principles and maintain this policy of clarity. That is the first act, “Security and stability”, which I wanted to come back to over these several chapters.

Our second major interest, when we talk about France, are our economic, technological, and strategic interests which serve the agenda that I set out for the country: to strengthen our

independence in all senses of the word, both immediate and long-term. Independence does not mean self-sufficiency, but it means that when we have partners, we choose them. We cannot be a long-term power, or even have a diplomacy, occasional strong and credible military action, if we have economic, technological or material dependence on a certain State or other. Dare I say we experienced that in recent times, all of us as Europeans, and it was a wake-up call. It must be food for thought in our approach from all aspects, and in our diplomacy. It is the key to lasting security, especially as we are in a period of international reallocation of resources and innovations. What is taking place today will determine our world in 10, 15 or 20 years.

Firstly, resources and rare materials are being preyed on. We must not be naïve: the Chinese started this before us. We watched them playing Go, and wondered what this game was; now, we are beginning to understand. But there are rare materials and resources that we, French people and Europeans, must have access to so we may diversify, and not be dependent on others. Secondly, on two major topics – green industries and new technologies, including artificial intelligence – there is currently widespread investment and reallocation of the productive forces that will determine many aspects of our abilities to be independent, create jobs in our countries and to possess sovereign civilian and military technologies in the future. This must absolutely structure our diplomatic approach.

That is why, if we are to be independent, we need a plan to achieve French and European strategic autonomy. It has now been six years since I first used the term “a more sovereign Europe” in my Sorbonne speech. People said it was a great French idea, for those who were the most reserved, or the most positive; others said it was French nonsense, and it would never happen, that we were doing it for our own satisfaction. I have noticed that there has been an awakening in the past five years, which is our collective victory. First of all, this idea has been adopted by all Europeans. So it might be “sovereignty”, or “strategic autonomy”, whichever term people are comfortable with. I myself do not understand the 50 shades of grey in that area, and furthermore, depending on the country, preference changes. Ultimately, I think we all know what it means. It means being in greater control of our destiny through what we produce, what we buy, and reducing our dependence by diversifying. So in recent years, from defence to technology and energy, we have crystallized a true European awakening and implemented real policies with results.

In terms of defence, we began with the European Defence Fund, the European Intervention Initiative, and we need to go much further. We started this as soon as COVID-19 hit, and since, with everything we’ve done in terms of health production, and through what we have built in the fields of semi-conductors and green technologies, through founding actions by the Commission and through investment policies. That was unthinkable five years ago. Unthinkable. We must consolidate that. It is, in my opinion, the cornerstone. The Versailles Agenda, which we put together as Europeans in March 2022, consolidates this strategic autonomy in all the fields I mentioned: semi-conductors, green technologies, digital technologies, etc.

On that basis, of course, the Franco-German partnership is key. In a few weeks I will go to Hamburg, and have a discussion in particular on artificial intelligence with the Chancellor, but the Franco-German duo is absolutely key in this field at a time when we are experiencing a shock that has shaken our Europe. So I will stop at nothing to re-engage and consolidate, so that we have increasingly stronger convergence of views. All of us Europeans need to go a lot faster and a lot stronger.

I would just like to mention a few aspects of this strategic autonomy which is key to our independence. First and foremost, we must have a clear European energy policy. We laid the regulatory groundwork with Fit for 55 and the Green Deal. They are the right bases. But we must now set out the instruments: we have not finished the job, if I may play diplomat for a minute.

Ultimately, the work that we need to carry out will allow us to be more independent, more decarbonized and help us continue creating jobs and industries on European soil. These are the three goals. To do this, we need more renewables, more nuclear energy, and more energy integration in Europe. We don't all agree on this agenda, so we will have to revive and increase efforts. But I will be clear: more coal in Europe is not good for this agenda. More fossil fuel dependence in Europe is not good for this agenda. More complex regulations on hydrogen, to find out what colour it is when it is produced with low-carbon methods, is not good for this agenda. I am for the free movement of low-carbon electrons in Europe. I think that's a good policy if we want the European energy future. The more low-carbon electrons we produce in Europe, the stronger and more independent we shall be. That is the strategy that we should pursue. We will have a lot more work to do in capital cities and in Brussels on this matter. It is essential. There is determined, renewed commitment underway with our German friends. We don't agree on this issue today. I think that it is a real concern, and it would be an error of history to deprive ourselves of nuclear energy or to slow down investments in terms of nuclear energy and innovation in Europe. Our priority must not be to disagree on the different energy models, but on the contrary enhance the integration of the European electricity grid, which is absolutely essential, because we are going to have to go more and more electric.

The second element is to have outright industrial policies. We have begun to build them and we must increase them, by going much faster and much more intensely. In that regard, I would like to draw your attention to the speech I gave at The Hague on our new European security doctrine. It is another "at the same time" that I believe in. Obviously, we need a strong single market policy and therefore more integration, from digital technology to the various fields of industry, but we need an audacious industrial policy where we provide assistance and invest, because the Chinese and the Americans are doing that. Today, if I had to sum up somewhat crudely, Europe has a tendency to over-regulate and under-invest, too slowly. A true European competitive industrial policy would be to have more innovation, more investment, and less over-regulation. And therefore implement what we committed to do, but also to have more European economic power across the continent, more speed of execution and power, whether we're talking about green technology, artificial intelligence or anything else, and to be able to compete with the Americans and the Chinese. We began with the actions taken following my

comments at the end of last year, which may have been a little direct, following the Inflation Reduction Act. We were right to do so. We must move faster and with more intensity, because we are not yet up to speed and we are too divided as Europeans.

The third element is that we must have a more realistic trade policy. I have already said that Europe cannot be the last continent that continues to make old-fashioned trade agreements. There are two new facts that we must incorporate into our trade policy: our strategic interests and the climate. Our strategic interests means that should the United States and China decide that green technologies imply not complying with the WTO rules, we cannot be the last to make progress on it. We must have a trade policy that defends the European production base. I do not want to prepare for a France or a Europe where we can only buy technologies built either in China or in the United States. That would not be sensible. So we must incorporate it into our trade policy. We cannot have European electric vehicles taxed at 25% when they arrive in China, and Chinese vehicles taxed at 10% when they arrive in Europe. I say that with a lot of respect and friendship for our Chinese friends; in that regard you are aware of my approach and my policy.

Reciprocity will apply here. Indeed, it is not naivety; we are not respected when we are naive. We must have a trade policy aligned with our strategic interests in industry. We must have a trade policy aligned with our climate strategies. We absolutely cannot ask our manufacturers and our farmers to comply with standards and negotiate trade agreements with powers who do not comply with those standards in order to import what we have prevented from being produced at home. Nobody can understand that in France. We cannot defend such a scenario. That is what fuels populism everywhere in Europe, and that is contributing to an absolutely catastrophic agenda which brings out extremists everywhere in Europe.

That is why we will continue to oppose trade agreements that would allow products that do not comply with our health or climate standards to be imported into Europe, whether this concerns carbon or biodiversity. Indeed, that is what makes us a trendsetter in that field. Don't forget that we were the first to push for bans on imported deforestation and put pressure on a lot of powers so that we could avoid such practices.

My final point is that we must, in that regard, have a Europe that is much more integrated and united. This European strategic and strategic autonomy agenda must be central to the European agenda to come and, in my view, central to the 2024 events that will structure European discussions. Everything that I am mentioning here is a more lucid, more sovereign, more integrated and more united Europe. It is essential that we clarify this agenda, and it will require structural reforms. But as you can see, our independence and the defence of our economic, technological and strategic interests requires this European agenda to be initiated, defended and if I may say so, enhanced in the months and years to come.

At the bilateral level, I require three main things from you, in addition to the tasks that you already know perfectly and which you carry out every day. We must continue to strengthen our efforts in terms of exports. You are aware that France's trade results are not good. They are not

good mainly because of our energy dependence. That is also the reason why a strategy shifting towards low carbon and the phase-out of fossil fuels is a good strategy for France, commercially speaking. We have strong main focuses, which we continue to consolidate, which become weakened during the same period, sometimes because of over-regulation. We must remain cautious on our agrifood industry results, but we must strengthen our agrifood export policy. Despite the commitment and investment of all of our producers, the European regulations that we have accumulated in recent years are sometimes an element of weakness with regard to other major powers. We must be clear-headed in that respect. But we must intensify our economic diplomacy and support for exports. On Thursday, a France Export plan will be presented. And I would like to thank the entire team of France Export, Business France and BPI, the CCI's, the AFD with Proparco and all of the diplomatic posts and economic services for their work. What I wanted to say here is that we must continue intensifying support to intermediate-sized enterprises, SMEs and start-ups. French Tech is a strength. We need it to be strong in exports too.

Secondly, we must have industry-specific projects, which contributed to the work that will be presented on Thursday because more and more, as we can see, the large companies that are a strength in exports must help the smallest ones. Typically, it is not a very French habit, it has to be said, compared to the other major European powers. We have to drive it further and intensify it. More and more, we need an integrated offering, because in many countries, that is the solution to challenges faced in hydrogen power, which is growing in a lot of emerging and intermediate countries, and another solution to another challenge, etc. Team France must be structured by industry-specific approaches.

Thirdly, include in your criteria job creation in France. This diplomacy must serve French reindustrialization and job creation. Sometimes, I myself think that I have spent a lot of time helping a large company, which is great; but I'm not sure that it needed me, and it isn't going to create jobs and more value in France. Sometimes it is more useful to help those who, through this export strategy, will create jobs in a site in France because it will export. It is a criterion that must be placed in the hierarchy of things, because we want the best for humanity, we want to strive for it, but first and foremost we want to reduce unemployment at home. That is one of the aims that I am setting in this France Export plan.

Next, through our exports, our diasporas and our binationals, I want to mobilize the life forces that we have in France. With Choose Africa, we have created mechanisms that involve everyone here present, to help African diasporas in France, to invest in and undertake their business projects in Africa and to build many more projects. This must be a key focus for all posts in Africa. With the Fonds Maghreb, we have also implemented an approach so that all binationals can increase projects on both sides of the Mediterranean. For me, that is a project that is also central to our export strategy, which must be promoted and furthered. These two elements must not be seen as anecdotal or secondary.

The second key element at the bilateral level is new investments and the economic attractiveness strategy. I will be brief in that respect, I know that several campaigns were

presented to you this morning. Choose France is an event that works well. For four years, we have been the most economically attractive country in Europe. We must enhance our efforts and consolidate this policy. That involves all the work we have done within France, but I am also counting on your participation. The next summit will take place in May 2024. We must continue there too, sometimes placing a focus on a certain country or region, or a certain vertical. I think it is very important to correctly prepare these events with all posts.

The last point I want to stress at the bilateral level is to secure our inputs. We must incorporate rare earths, rare materials and critical minerals in our economic diplomacy roadmap. Following the task that was entrusted to Philippe Varin, we have an interministerial delegate responsible for this matter, Mr Gallezot. It is very important that the roadmap is clear for all the posts and that we incorporate it into our diversification. In that regard, it is an aberration that I was the first French President to travel to Mongolia when we see the potential it has for some of these critical materials. The same exists in many other countries. So we must map out our course, and through our diplomacy, ministerial visits and parliamentary diplomacy, we must strengthen the ties that are essential with countries that would allow us to secure access to these materials, minerals or rare earths, because it is a factor in the diversification of a lot of our production, and therefore in our independence.

Talking about independence and our interests leads me to conclude this second section with immigration. It is a topic that is always sensitive when we talk about it in a diplomatic setting, and when one is the President of the French Republic, because we get the impression that we will be led to play two different anthems: the national anthem and the international anthem. And what's more, it is our own organization issues that cause us to lack efficiency in this area. That is what I requested in that matter from the Ministers of the Interior and of Overseas France and the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs and I want to thank them for the enhanced work done in recent months.

What do we want in terms of immigration? First, we want to control our borders, the Schengen borders, and within Schengen we want to control our internal borders when there are risks that justify it, which is provided for in our treaties and it is what we do in terms of the terrorist threat. We want to reduce the uncontrolled flows and obviously fight smugglers and illegal immigration. And we want to fight all forms of non-cooperation within Europe, which causes our internal organization to collapse under the strain of illegal smugglers manipulating the right to asylum and disrupting our organization. Which means that we have timelines that are not viable, we have people who stay in France too long and who have travelled here illegally via smugglers and who must be deported, and when the process is implemented after 18 months we cannot deport them. I am giving a very brief summary of the struggles we have experienced for years. We want to do this in a framework aligned with our principles and values, the right to asylum and the protection of freedom fighters, the economic migration that is wanted and the family reunification that we speak about often, forgetting that most of these people are connected to French nationals who marry non-French nationals and want to bring them here – when we look at the reality behind the figures. So behind that, we need to be much more efficient, more determined but also more transparent. A bill will be presented; we launched a

European action under the French Presidency and which is on the right track. The Tourcoing summit enabled us to strengthen the protection mechanisms for our shared borders. We will continue this effort.

But I wanted to stress two points in this respect, because at the same time as this effort, we of course want to maintain our economic attractiveness, meaning allowing the free movement of talent. I do mean free movement, so as to attract the best students, but to allow them then to serve their own countries, to go back and forth: that is the partnership rationale. We want to continue to have the best researchers, the best entrepreneurs, the greatest artists and to exert our influence, so we must be an open power. How can the two be reconciled? By having clear objectives and instruments that work. So to do that, the first point is that we must implement the Hermelin report on the visa policy. I say this because it is a sort of post-mortem of what we did not succeed in doing when we decided to toughen our visa policy for States that do not fully play ball on the migration issue. We did it; that caused problems for a lot of families who actually contributed to good ties and relationships, who had nothing to do with non-compliance with these migration policies. It caused problems to those who maintained ties and it tarnished our reputation and our image, without really improving our effectiveness, if I am to summarize what we did. Nonetheless, that does not mean that we should fall into permissiveness. No, we must have a policy of strictness but which allows us to intelligently shape and simplify our visa policy when we are talking about people who keep the bilateral relationship alive, and who are well known. To sum up, as often, we are not effective enough with the criminal networks and we create too much strife for those who love France and keep the bilateral relationship alive. That is what we need to change.

The second element is that we must have a clear European strategy. That is what we are currently tackling, in terms of control and conditionality of our assistance and visa policy in Europe and with Schengen, because all of that won't work if we have partners within Schengen who do not apply them. We experienced that when we toughened our conditions, when some of our neighbours had liberalized the same conditions, allowing entrance to the Schengen Area. So this policy needs to be European, at least in the framework of the Schengen Area, and that is exactly the discussion we will have in the coming months. This is the balance that is not ambiguous, but the refusal of a spirit of facility. We want to continue being an economically attractive, open power, but we want to fight illegal immigration, smuggler networks, and the things that today damage the tranquillity and safety in certain neighbourhoods or regions in our country. So, a European policy, a visa policy and a French policy: that will be the framework of a bill that will be presented, or in any case which will continue its parliamentary journey in the coming weeks, under the minister's authority.

The third element I wanted to come back to is our role as a trust- and partnership-based power. Last year, and in previous years, I have often come back to what we called an effective multilateralism, and in this context, France's role as a balancing power. Our challenge, which we should not take on alone, is that in this increasingly fragmented world, we need more international cooperation and to avoid a partition of the world in this duopoly. In that respect, I want us to strengthen our action around some aspects of partnerships that I deeply believe in

which, while defending our interests, principles and those of sovereignty, allow us to dialogue with everyone.

First of all, the renewal of our geographical partnerships. I will be very brief because on this first one, I have already spoken a lot: it is Africa. I mentioned Africa with regard to the security issue. But since the Ouagadougou speech in November 2017, and up until the conference held here on 27 February this year, through the various speeches that I gave and the very important Montpellier Summit, which may have, to some people, sometimes appeared strange: I believe that it is a quintessential aspect of the new method that our partnership with Africa should be based on a thorough change in aims, methods and the people we engage with. We still have a tendency to only speak with capital cities and the people in power. Obviously we need to do so just like everywhere, and it is the work of the ambassador; but more than elsewhere, we must speak with and strengthen the ties with civil society, the oppositions and all aspects of the life-force. It is absolutely essential. If we were caught off-guard on the African continent, it is because we sometimes had a system that was too staid, and extremely close to those who were in power so that in the end, it ignored the rest of society. And at some point, when society shifts, we no longer have sensors, and that is the truth. When I see the amount of solidarity investment, partnerships, the strength of the teams we have in a lot of these countries, it is unacceptable. So we must venture off the beaten track more often and boost the work with civil societies, and with all our partners, with an agenda that focuses a lot more on school, health, agriculture, the climate and therefore the basics of solidarity investment that we have established, in the framework of the Presidential Council. We must also move away from solely geographical priorities that create an effect of resilience and habit; ultimately, eaten bread is soon forgotten. Lastly, we had a policy that people couldn't see and didn't know that it was a French policy; they did not thank us. Of course, we must be realistic: today we can see that the anti-France sentiment is greatly manipulated by neo-imperialist networks in Africa, but there are also a lot of places where nobody knows that France is responsible for implementing a certain project.

So we must strengthen our ties with civil societies and everyone involved, including those who might appear to be the most marginal. We must strengthen the points I mentioned in our vertical markets. Our approach must be much more focused on training, economic development and strengthening our action through culture, sport and all of these drivers. In that respect, I wish to highlight the significance of the Africa 2020 season which, in showcasing innovation, technology and culture, completely changed the perspective we have of the continent. We will have *Africa Création* in Paris from 6 to 8 October, which is a very important event for which I will require the involvement of all posts in Africa. And I would like us to finalize the setting up of the *Maison des Mondes Africains* in the next six months, as it is also a very important project in that respect. As part of this effort and this partnership, I strongly encourage you to continue this change of method and to go a lot further so that we will have more influence, more effectiveness and stronger ties.

I want to emphasize our agenda in support, and at the service, of democracy in Africa. On this issue, we have a difficulty, namely our past. We digested it, as I say, in Ouagadougou. I myself was born after all the decolonizations. And we cannot say that the African continent is

tremendous, that it's a very young continent with 70% of the population born after the decolonizations, even more than 70%, and still having a dialogue completely hung up on post-colonialism. This is manipulation. After all, you have to be clear-sighted. We must not fall into the trap of being simplistic, of habits, of the post-colonialism we fuelled after colonization. But we have to take the responsibility of having a genuine policy of supporting democracy. And in this regard, Achille Mbembe's initiative, the fund we have put in place and its very open action, are an important element we must draw on. Now, we must draw on it intelligently, i.e. through partnership, not by digesting or Frenchifying it, but by accepting that it is open and at the service of all. As on many other points, we want our policy to follow this philosophy. And I think this is very important.

The second element of geographical partnership I wanted to emphasize is the Indo-Pacific region. Since May 2018, we have had a strategy for that region, because we are an Indo-Pacific power, we have 1.5 million inhabitants in the region and 8,000 military personnel. So I am going to reiterate the terms of our Indo-Pacific policy for us, for our partners in the region and more broadly. It is a policy of stringency and engagement with China. I have had the opportunity to make several speeches on China; I won't go back over them further here. We made what I think was an important trip to China in this regard a few months ago.

France does not have a policy of hostility towards China. We have a policy of engagement, we want to improve the terms of our economic exchanges, we believe it is a major partner at technological and other levels. We know China is needed for solutions to be found on the issues of peace or climate, to mention only two. We are clear-sighted about these political changes and what makes us different, be it principles or other points. And so it is a policy of stringency and engagement. I say this because we are approaching an important year, because 2024 will mark the 60th anniversary of our diplomatic relations, with milestones on many of our agendas. And so we must continue this line, which I think is a pragmatic line. I say so because we have never been naïve, we have never been indulgent towards a more offensive Chinese policy. And we have always said, with great respect but also stringency, what goes with strategic autonomy.

We are the first European country to have said communication technologies are an issue of national sovereignty, that we will not let certain components being deployed. We did so respectfully. Then we Europeanized this approach. This is the line we must stick to. And so our Indo-Pacific partnership is about fighting for a free, open, peaceful Indo-Pacific. Our way of seeing things is to protect freedom of sovereignty without a spirit of conflictuality, while recommitting to our presence militarily, recommitting to joint exercises, as we did again last summer, and drawing on our overseas territories. I think this is a very important element of our Indo-Pacific policy.

It is precisely about taking an approach – through French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna, Réunion, Mayotte, and our French Southern and Antarctic Lands – that harnesses these strategic presences and deploys cooperation projects. Again, this is what we announced in Nouméa a few months ago, on the joint military academy and deployments. It is what we are

doing in French Polynesia on infrastructure-related and economic aspects. It is what we are doing in Réunion on our regional partnerships in the Indian Ocean and integrated diplomacy.

The Indo-Pacific partnership has enabled us – as we saw again this summer from Papua New Guinea to Vanuatu – to completely review the relationship, because you have many States in the region that do not want to be confined, to the choice between the United States and China. This policy of an open, unsubmissive, non-equidistant partnership – I am always careful to specify this, because afterwards I always get several columns or comments saying I am equidistant between the United States and China. I am not going to repeat the whole story for you: the US are our allies, we share the same values, and we do not have the same relationship with China.

What the partners in the region understand – and I have checked this – is this third way. Now, there are lots of people who hate it. I like it very much, and the people I talk to understand clearly that it is effective. So the people in the region very much like being told that in France they have a major country which is a diplomatic, military and economic power, which admittedly is not a major demographic power, it is being diluted in today's world, but which is ultimately in the vanguard in Europe, because the country has reliable partners, and is offering an alliance that is not in conflict with China but is not about surrendering everything to it either. This policy is a path to the future. Believe me, in my experience it is a form of common sense. And so we must have a modest military agenda proportionate to what we are, a diplomatic agenda, a climate, economic and cultural agenda which is extremely fruitful and also draws on our overseas territories. And that is why we must also engage much more in our regional diplomacy, our overseas communities throughout the region. I think this is an absolutely key point.

I also want us to develop the same spirit in both the Caribbean and Amazonia. In the Caribbean, I welcome the fact that Martinique has re-joined CARICOM. We are going to do everything to ensure Guadeloupe can do the same thing. It's a very good way of building regional partnerships and integration. In Latin America, I have heard many comments about this summer's summit in Amazonia, but it so happens that today we are not party to the treaty. So I really wanted to go there, to be the only European head of State, alongside European ambassadors, to go and explain how we are financing Amazonia. We are a power in Amazonia through French Guiana. So I am saying officially that France is a candidate to join the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization and give it its full place, and also have representation closely involving French Guiana. That is very important, and we must conduct our diplomacy through our overseas territories. I would really like Brazil and all the powers in the region to agree to our candidature request and allow us to be part of this format.

I also think we must very profoundly rethink our partnerships in the Maghreb and the Mediterranean. I think that in recent years we have deployed many initiatives with civil society – I mentioned this for Africa, but also with the Maghreb: the Summit of the Two Shores, the cultural season being organized for 2026, and the many partnerships on culture and entrepreneurship. But let's be clear-sighted: bilateral relations are not at the level they should be. I am not going to repeat

them each here: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, but also other countries in the Middle East. So what is it due to? There are many discussions each time. I cannot say it is about a lack of engagement by France with many of them, including in the efforts we have made on issues related to remembrance or economic matters. There is also a crisis in the region and in the way it is organized, where enmities are not absent. There are multiple, diverse difficulties. And so going beyond what we have done with civil society, we are going to take several bilateral initiatives. I would like to re-engage with several of those countries in the coming months, and consolidate what we did with the Baghdad Conference, which is crucial for the Middle East, and I would like an agenda for intergovernmental revitalization with the whole region or more widely to be consolidated by the end of the year, under the Minister's authority.

But it is clear that environmental, climate and co-production issues should enable us to rethink a regional agenda on terms different from the ones we are experiencing. But beyond this geographical approach, when I talk about making France a trusted partner power, it also means taking risks when it comes to international governance. Indeed, there is a crisis in this international governance, as I explained in my introductory remarks, because there are increasing challenges to the United Nations Security Council, the IMF, the World Bank etc. I mentioned this earlier in very direct terms; this is what I hear everywhere. And you only have to open the window to hear an outpouring.

And certain people play on it, we must be clear. The Gulf countries look at us today and say to us: "there you are with your principles, your rights, your rules, your IMF criteria. Who are you? An old continent, demographically in decline, dependent in terms of energy, and technologically uncertain. We are going to work with India and China, which are less demanding than you, and a lot of poor developing countries that prefer our agenda. We annoy them less with our criteria." This is what is happening in many countries where you represent France. When they do not manage to find money at the IMF, they now go and look for it in the Gulf countries or elsewhere, or from other deep pockets offering another agenda with other criteria, other values. I do not overestimate what the BRICS+ summit meant I did not see people knocking on the G20's door – except we the G20 are going to bring in the African Union. But it tells us something, because unless we can reform the structures we have today, which promote international law and rules which I think are good, the risk is of the emergence of destabilizing moves and therefore the partition of the world that I mentioned.

So my first point in this regard, if we want to be trusted partners, is this: I want you to make me proposals and I want us to be bold enough to be protagonists in a radical reform of global governance. In particular, we must reform the governance of the IMF and World Bank. It's no longer tolerable for those around the table to represent systems that are essentially determined by affiliate members and for them to be only the rich countries. Unless we bring back many of those countries which are not there, we will allow an alternative order to be created and move towards the marginalization of our own system. We must move towards more effectiveness in this system, but we must also reform its governance.

Next, I would like us to work as Europeans – and I am going to propose this to a few heads of State and government – on new formats with India, Brazil and South Africa. We must not confine ourselves to the existing formats. And I think it is very important with the major emerging powers and those promoting them to create new formats and look at international governance factors, climate and energy agenda, beyond the relations we have with the United States on the one hand, China on the other, and the structures we are in. So we must be bold, and I am open to all your suggestions on this.

In this regard, we set out on a very formative path – and I want it to pave the way over the coming months and years – with the meeting held in Paris in June, the Paris Agenda for People and the Planet. Our Paris Summit for a New Global Financing Pact gave rise to what we called the Four Ps declaration. It's apt, it works equally well in the language of Shakespeare as in that of Molière. I very much believe in what we built, because we built it, first of all, by devising the agenda with poor, developing, middle-income and emerging countries. As we said, there are basically four simple principles. You must not have to choose between the fight against poverty and the fight for the climate. That relaxes everyone, because really they all felt we were lecturing them about how to comply with our climate agenda, without helping them more to combat poverty.

Secondly, the path followed is a national path. It is dictated neither in Brussels nor in Washington nor in any forum. And so we are building partnerships to support a national trajectory. Thirdly, we need a concessionary jolt, we need more public money, which we have done for ourselves, but we must push the agenda everywhere. And that is what we did, through a powering-up of the World Bank and IMF, which led to announcements and new guidelines at the summit which we are going to have to implement, because it's clear we cannot resolve the agenda of the fight against poverty and for the climate unless we put in more money. Fourth point: we need a lot more private money, and so we must have much stronger leverage for our action. This applies to all our development banks, multilateral banks and institutions. If there is no leverage, there is often a crowding-out effect. And so mobilizing private money is essential for this agenda. Our agenda, the P4, is what must shape our action in the coming months. Basically it's about building a new international public and private consensus around this agenda: poverty, climate, biodiversity. So I would like it to punctuate the next meetings that are held.

We will have the Paris Peace Forum on 10, 11 and 12 November, which will provide a milestone and consolidation on this issue. We are going to set up a small follow-up team, also mobilizing heads of State and government representing all the countries concerned, because the initiative must not come solely from Paris. And we will have a milestone at the summit we will organize just before the Olympic and Paralympic Games, with an Olympic sustainable development summit in Paris in July 2024, with the P4 at the heart of the agenda. This is absolutely essential.

So this agenda will also be punctuated by several initiatives I wanted to recall here. Indeed, we must continue coming together very practically on this agenda. At the request of the World Food Programme, the first school meals summit will be held on 18 and 19 October 2023 in

Paris. France is organizing and hosting it, and we will be mobilizing the whole planet on this very important agenda. We will also be sponsoring the International Fund for Agricultural Development's replenishment in Paris on 14 and 15 December 2023, with a target of \$2 billion, which is also very important in the context of the food crisis we are experiencing. It contributes to the FARM initiative we took in the first days of the war in Ukraine, in particular to strengthen the production capabilities of developing and middle-income countries. As you can see, this partnership of trust requires this P4 initiative, and the markers I have just set down are, in my view, essential.

In practical terms, in addition to the the meetings I mentioned, we will obviously continue rolling out our climate agenda, always linking climate and biodiversity, which are absolutely inseparable, but also with several meetings over the next few months. Obviously COP28 will be the key engagement, at the end of the year. With all the signs of an aggravated climate crisis increasing, our ability to get results now is at stake. And what is happening on the climate totally illustrates what I have just been saying to you. We can see certain emerging countries using, in a sense, the political argument "It is the responsibility of the West and so we are not ultimately going to make too much effort". And where there is a lot of money to mobilize in certain emerging countries or certain States currently benefiting from the hydrocarbons windfall, there is under-investment because, in a way, there is a form of diplomacy of resentment or stigmatization against the Europeans and Americans. We must absolutely not give in to that, but it requires this re-engagement and this partnership of trust, in particular on the climate issue. At the meeting that will be organized by Kenya in a few weeks' time – and I pay tribute to President Ruto's commitment – France will obviously be at his side. We are going to roll out the Paris Agenda for People and the Planet and, at the Nairobi summit and for COP28, put in place new financing options, a mobilization of the World Bank and the IMF together, a greater number of simpler and faster instruments, and a mobilization of the private sector.

Then we must create new ambitions on the energy front. France will promote a very clear agenda for moving away from oil and coal, because that is where the effort must be concentrated. Basically, the crux of the battle must be about reducing dependence on oil everywhere, but above all reducing dependence on coal, particularly in the major emerged countries. I refer you – I've already mentioned it on several occasions, but there is a very good diagram produced by the AFD which shows the impact. We must stop over-investing politically in small projects in developing countries and middle-income countries where a lot of political and media pressure is often exerted. The crux of the battle is for the emerging countries to move away from coal. That is central to the battle over the next 10 years. And so we must redouble our efforts. This is what we have started doing, I think, very powerfully through our Just Energy Transition Partnerships, known as JETPs, in South Africa, Indonesia, Vietnam and Senegal. We are going to continue implementing these agreements, but above all we are now going to put more emphasis on oil and coal. We must also go further in partnership with these major emerging countries on carbon storage, renewable energy, green hydrogen and nuclear power.

Then there is all the work on biodiversity and the protection of forests, which are both carbon sinks and biodiversity treasures. And those tropical forests and primary forests have been a

focus of our diplomacy's effort for several months. With the One Forest Summit in Libreville in March, we initiated a diplomatic move we had begun in Sharm el-Sheikh, which is absolutely essential, namely to say that basically, over 14% of the planet's surface – essentially Amazonia, the Congo Basin forest and Southeast Asia –, host the most precious primary and tropical forests. We have 90% of ecosystems for known vertebrate species and 75% of unrecoverable carbon. And we have created all the possible mechanisms to carry out reforestation. The protection of those species is not being promoted enough. And as you can see, every time those areas are deforested, we take a huge step back, because massive quantities of unrecoverable carbon are released, ecosystems for biodiversity are destroyed that are often totally unrecoverable too, and I am afraid we take a terrible backward step.

So we have created a new way of doing things. We are going to finalize at COP28 the development of biodiversity credits and an improved functioning of the carbon market. We have established conservation partnerships that we began to implement with Gabon and Papua New Guinea last summer, with the release of public and private funding to protect those spaces in conjunction with indigenous peoples. And we are going to continue this; it is what we also want to do in Amazonia, through our own territory but also our main partners, in particular Brazil.

Finally, on the climate, there is all the work on the oceans, which is a fundamental challenge, for the climate too but also for biodiversity and sovereignty. Recent months have seen some very significant steps forward: the BBNJ agreement for the high seas and the negotiations on plastics, and France played a key role in them. I congratulate all the negotiation teams on this, because those agreements had been deadlocked for a very long time and we managed – in particular through the talks with the G7 and others – to make historic progress.

All this paves the way for the United Nations Oceans Conference that we will be hosting in Nice in June 2025 and organizing jointly with Costa Rica. It is an engagement we must start preparing for now, because there is an oceans diplomacy to build, just as we have started having a forests diplomacy. And these are extremely important levers, firstly because they speak to people, precisely because they build new channels. We are much more credible than our competitors, and I think they allow us to mobilize our diplomacy both innovatively and effectively.

Finally, I want us to mobilize these partnerships in terms of cooperation and trust for two final issues. One – I'll say it very briefly – is obviously the fight against international inequalities and for fairer international taxation. We must carry through the work done in recent years for a minimum tax and digital taxation. The job is not over and we must continue engaging with obstructive elements on the international front and obviously with the technology, in particular artificial intelligence. In recent years we have been at the heart of real diplomatic innovations. With the *Tech for Good* summits, we began to have a genuinely new form of partnership approach. We put round the table States, NGOs, businesses and all the technology stakeholders, which crystallized on the basis of the Christchurch Call in May 2019. The first summit was held right here and is now being steadily rolled out. And I really want to welcome the partnership

with our friends from New Zealand. We must follow the thread of this partnership, which has enabled us to remove terrorist content online within an hour. We must continue the work of combating hateful content and the manipulation of information, and basically have digital law and order. It is absolutely essential. We built on this in November 2022 with an initiative to protect children online, which is key, the second meeting of which we will hold at the Paris Peace Forum.

It is exactly the same method, that of the multi-stakeholder process, that we want for artificial intelligence. We are trying to build a joint Franco-German plan, and the G7 focused on it in Hiroshima. Europe has started regulating; our challenge is to invest more as Europeans in order to be competitive with the Americans and Chinese and therefore have, first of all, an investment and competitiveness agenda and to think immediately about regulation and think about it at the right scale. Regulating artificial intelligence can be properly done only at the international scale. We cannot regionalize its regulation. That would be a mistake, because if Europe moves too fast and too far in terms of regulation now, at the very time when we are not currently a driving power, we are taking a big risk. Secondly, because there is a wake-up call everywhere about the need for regulation and so we must engage with it and, in a way, take the initiative. The British are organising an initial summit, which is important, at which France will be represented at the beginning of November.

At the Paris Peace Forum we will be having an important summit on regulation, and the G7 has decided that the regulation bodies will be sited in Paris. Indeed, the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence, created under the Canadian G7 presidency, which we consolidated in Biarritz under the French presidency, has its office alongside the OECD. And this is an opportunity: the OECD, the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence, and UNESCO with its cultural and ethical dimensions must become places of thought and of devising the regulation of artificial intelligence, and Paris is their natural capital. But we must do it now, in very close association with all partners and with the multi-stakeholder approach I mentioned. We must think about regulation at the instruments' design stage, and as broadly as possible, with an approach like that of the OECD: very inclusive in order to be effective, and also case-specific, i.e. the fight against the manipulation of information, and the most sensitive products. This is a key agenda for us, and we will be adopting this method.

So as you can see, all these partnerships are key, and I am not being exhaustive about the method to be adopted. One of them, which we will try and deploy at the Paris Peace Forum, will be our agenda for the poles, and here we will hold a scientific and diplomatic meeting precisely to try and reconsolidate the international strategy we must have for the North and South Poles.

Finally – and I will finish on this –, all this is obviously served and accompanied by an agenda of international outreach and influence. You are familiar with it, it is central to your approach, to what we have been doing for years, sometimes decades, and to your commitment. At this time, even more than in the past, we must step up our collective efforts for French language and culture, because I believe it is an agenda serving our country's interests. It serves the geopolitical, economic and strategic agendas I was talking about. The more French is spoken,

the more we create a closeness and a sound understanding of what we are. I also think it is a useful agenda for the regions where we are developing it. In this respect, we must continue carrying out the AEFÉ [Agency for French Education Abroad] reform we launched, which allows us to teach many more French and non-French children, more effectively, in our language with our methods and consolidate both France's role as an educational power and the importance of French. I had the opportunity in July to bring together here all the *Alliances françaises*, and I again want to applaud their work, which is essential in this respect. Also that of our *Institut français* and all its structures throughout the world, of our museums, our cultural institutions through their diplomatic strategy, through their action and through the initiatives they take, be it in France or abroad. We have to redouble our efforts and proposals. With the enthusiasm of day one, I want us to redouble our efforts. France is expected to act on this issue in every region, so promoting the French language and, above all, our artists, artists from the countries in which you serve, the possibility of moving around – students as well, in the courses we are developing – is a tremendous lever of influence.

In this respect, I want to draw attention here to a key point: *le Sommet de la Francophonie* [international Francophone organization – OIF] summit in October 2024. For the first time in a long time, France will be hosting it. The idea is also to de-institutionalize it as much as possible because these summits are too old-fashioned, and to show how decentralized they are – let me remind you that the OIF is a format which non-French heads of State came up with and instigated out of a love for French language – and to try and map out new ways forward where young people will be at the heart of the project we promote. This summit will be held at the *Cité internationale de la langue française* in Villers-Cotterêts, which we will be inaugurating on 19 October, and which is also going to be a place offering you support, training, educational and cultural support, a place of action. There will be artist and also academic residencies, and it is genuinely going to be an important place of work.

Alongside the work on language and culture, there is the work on our influence – I obviously can't help but stress that point. We discussed this at the Quai d'Orsay in March; the Minister has come back to it several times. It is central to the Military programming act roadmap. It is a delicate matter because these are part of a continuum. Influence is a concept, I would say, which lives in society and has its place in everyday speech. It is about being well regarded, at most being liked, understood and, if possible, followed. It has now become a function of diplomacy because there is counter-influence. So it has become one of the core missions, and I really want to pay tribute to what the Quai d'Orsay has started doing both at central-government level and in terms of raising awareness in posts. We must continue this work by transforming the digital tool, the approach, and searching for allies and partners.

There is continuity in the military, as we can clearly see; we have seen this in the most important theatres of operation, because it is difficult to conduct a long-term military operation when counter-influence is being wielded on our soil, in our own information networks and in the countries we operate in. Then this obviously affects the issue of information, because influence wielded by whatever power, according to the rules it uses and its transparency, sometimes falsifies free, neutral information and completely changes how public opinion is shaped. I say

this because the issue of influence is key to the effectiveness of our diplomatic action and the very way our democracies operate, abroad and at home. And this is why it is a very sensitive function, and I will have an opportunity to come back to this in a more structured way in the coming months, because it presupposes – and incidentally we have done this for France – structured, clear democratic and judicial controls, action that is transparent for everyone, but also greater effectiveness and an end to naivety.

And talking of international action, I just want to say a few more words here. We must continue to be much more effective. There are major imperial powers today that are more effective than us and are creating means of exerting influence through every channel – social media, underlying government channels and others – which we must analyse carefully and block. So we have to make an effort in terms of organization but also doctrine, tools and massive investment in all areas of influence, and do so quickly because we are suffering the consequences. When I hear talk of anti-French sentiment in many African countries, it is the result of a strategy of counter-influence and disinformation; it is being done very effectively. Sometimes it uses what was done by those who were our friends; they were able to fill football stadiums cheaply and get French presidents applauded. Now they are doing this with other ideas. So they are organized, they are doing this on social media. We know the tools, but we must be careful. We have rightly clarified and standardized our tools. That is very good. At any rate, we are sometimes rendered powerless in this area, so we have got to be much more effective.

We then need to think, as I said, about the role of public-service broadcasting on the international stage, and of *France Médias Monde*, which is a tremendous lever of influence. But we have got to be clear about the importance we attach to it and the role it plays. Because when it is the only lever of what is considered to be a free press, it has a wholly significant function, it faces propaganda. And when this propaganda is taken at face value, it is an issue because sometimes it threatens France directly – we have just experienced this again in Niger. At any rate, thought must be given to the scope of its intervention because at the same time many States view this body as a State body, which I can reassure you it no longer is. It is interpreted as such and used by powers challenging us as the product of French imperialism in the information field. So we have created a somewhat losing equation here: we have a tool made up of independent editorial teams – which is obviously what we believe in for a free press – but which, as a result, wholly refrains from doing any work of influencing, and which, in countries that see it as a tool of the State exercising influence, is viewed by other powers – exercising real influence for governmental purposes – as a way of justifying and legitimizing what they are doing. These are my own words, it is what I am experiencing and, I think, what many diplomats in those countries are experiencing. So in my view we are not using the common tool in the best way. I am really asking for this to be tackled courageously. The national conference on information should be an opportunity for us to think about this, but the journalistic independence I care so deeply about and will strenuously defend in France and elsewhere must not be used to stop us thinking about a new world in different geographies. The need for proper use of public money and the responsibility I hold require me to embark on this absolutely

essential task of reflection that must be central to the work of the Foreign and Culture Ministers in the coming months.

Finally, in the next few months this international outreach – and I will conclude on these two points – will be reflected through sport, history and remembrance.

For sport it is obvious, but it is good to repeat it. From 8 September, France will host the Rugby World Cup. It is a diplomatic event, an event of international outreach, but we will have many leaders in Paris, from the southern hemisphere in particular. So obviously it needs to be prepared for, showcased and consolidated as part of our sports partnerships across all the regions I mentioned.

Then the Olympic Games' opening takes place on 26 July next year, and today a year from now the Paralympic Games open in Paris. These Olympic and Paralympic Games are a tremendous diplomatic event of international outreach and influence. Firstly, in terms of France's ability to host, its gastronomy and what it offers; our representatives are working on this to ensure that the French art of living, our gastronomy, our ability to host, precisely, are showcased and seen to the full. But Paris's legacy in terms of inclusivity, sport, school sport, sport and health will be at the heart of these events, along with the Olympic sustainable development summit I have announced, which will be held just before them.

Finally, our international outreach will also be reflected through our history and our remembrance, because the next few months will be marked by the 80th anniversary of the Liberation and the Landings in France. It will begin in Corsica in a few weeks and continue in spring and summer 2024, with many events in between that we will have to organize in Normandy and Provence, which are the two epicentres, but also in pretty much all the French territories. And this is happening at the very time when the last generations of survivors are disappearing and when we are doing a huge amount of work in terms of history and remembrance with many historians, with the involvement of the Armed Forces Ministry and the Education Ministry on this issue, but also international work since many of our allied powers, and also those from the African continent and the Pacific, joined us in the liberation of French territory and the Landings. So we will have to prepare for these diplomatic events very carefully. I have entrusted the task to Ambassador Etienne, who, with several historians and military and administrative staff, is steering the mission to prepare for the events and commemorations.

Ladies and gentlemen ambassadors, that is what I wanted to say to you as the week gets under way and before you begin your work on the international situation as I see it, and some of our major objectives. There is a great deal of work. Obviously I have not talked about certain regions, certain countries, but I have already spoken for too long so I hope you won't mind. I will have the opportunity in the coming weeks and months to revisit several of the issues mentioned here, or some I did not expand on enough. At any rate, I want to reiterate to you here my confidence and support for your missions. They further the agenda of France and the nation,

its economic and also its moral strength. At an extremely uncertain time, as you have seen, they represent our interests, our independence and our principles, on which we must yield nothing.

I am counting on you. Long live the Republic and long live France!