

1 September 2022 - *Seul le prononcé fait foi*

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Speech by the President of the French Republic at the conference of ambassadors.

Ambassadors,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear friends,

I must say that I am particularly pleased to be here with you for today's Conference of Ambassadors after two years in which the global public health situation stopped us being here. That absence was felt even if, last year, the meeting was held by other means: the atmosphere, the informal discussions and the ways and means of building convergences are not the same. And let me express, as I begin this speech firstly my thanks, because this long COVID-19 crisis that has deeply affected our country has also been a great trial, I know, for your teams, and sometimes for yourselves and your families. Several of you have served in countries that have been hit particularly hard, under major constraints, and have spent months under difficult conditions. But above all, you and your teams have contributed to the essential mission that was ours in these times: protecting the French people. And I commend the exceptional dedication you and all your teams have shown to our citizens: they needed protection, sometimes repatriation, as we all remember, at the beginning of the epidemic. Access to vaccines was needed, as were repatriations during the crisis and organization of education for children. We had to rise to all the trials this unprecedented period brought for our diplomatic, consular, cultural and educational network.

I would also like to commend, at the same time as each and every one of you in your posts, the work of the Crisis and Support Centre that accomplished exceptional work in the face of this public health crisis, just as it did, with the help and support of several of you in Afghanistan, too, last summer, and in Ukraine today. Crises have gathered pace in recent years, have been exacerbated, I would even say, but one crisis should not make us forget another, and I would like to start by commending your great dedication during this period.

Despite the pandemic, I have been able to count on you and your dedication throughout the last five years serving our country. Despite sometimes facing unfavourable winds and unexpected events, I think I can say that we have both taken real action and built useful benchmarks for collective action. We have made strengthening European sovereignty a tangible reality. And I would like to stress here strongly: when I spoke at Sorbonne University in September 2017, proposing on your behalf, for all of us, a more united, more sovereign, more democratic Europe, many across Europe said, "What's this French whim, a more sovereign Europe? Strategic autonomy? What does that mean? We will soon come back to the principles under which we have lived so far. The reality will be different. This will remain just words." We have established the framework and I am pleased to say that it has been generalized. It has gradually been adopted by Europe as a whole, including Germany now. And I would like to welcome the speech by Federal Chancellor Scholz in Prague two days ago, which is totally in line with this thought and action. Above all, we have acted together to build a stronger Defence Europe, brick after brick. We have done that multilaterally and bilaterally, with specific agreements with Greece and Croatia, to cite but two. We have strengthened this European Union. We have also structured unprecedented bilateral agreements with Germany and Italy.

And our Europe has moved forward in the face of crises. Faced with the pandemic and thanks to the action of our network, it is our Europe that provided vaccines and thus contributed to protecting people. It is also our Europe that ensured an essential economic recovery through an agreement between Germany and France in May 2020, followed by European agreement in July that year that provided us with an unprecedented investment capacity across the 27 Member States and enabled pooling of common debt for future investments. That too had appeared totally impossible. And, faced with the return of war to our continent, we brought a united, swift and strong response in adopting massive, unprecedented sanctions against Russia two days after the start of the conflict, in maintaining our unity, in banishing the Kremlin's propaganda organs from our democracies and in taking the historic step of granting candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova.

But Europe has not only moved forward in responding to crises. There is an achievement, as I was saying: that of Defence Europe, to cite but one example. That of a Europe that is also more sovereign when it comes to technology too, with absolutely fundamental Internet regulation. There is the record of the French Presidency of the European Union that is your achievement. That achieved precisely thanks to the work of the Foreign

Ministry, our Permanent Representation that coordinated interministerial work in liaison with the General Secretariat for European Affairs, involving many of the Ministers here today. But despite the war started on 24 February, despite the pandemic that was still here, despite the political context in our country that I need not mention here, our French Presidency of the European Union made progress that was equally fundamental for our continent.

In the fight against climate change, to achieve our goal of reducing our emissions by 55% by 2030. The “Fit for 55” package has moved forward, with a dozen or so texts dedicated to it. On improving the working and living conditions for European citizens, progress has been made with the directive on minimum wages, on pay equality between men and women, and on equal representation on corporate boards. Some of these texts had been deadlocked for more than a decade but have, thanks to the new German coalition, shifted the balance. On the regulation of digital giants, we have moved to stop the strongest making the rules with two directives, the Digital Services Act, or DSA, and the Digital Markets Act, or DMA. On defence too, the adoption of our Strategic Compass, an exercise that we launched alongside our German friends during their Presidency, has brought progress. We have transformed our Europe. It is no longer the same as it was five years ago. It is more self-aware, more sovereign, stronger. In doing so, we have proven wrong all those who said Brexit would spark the beginning of a long series of renunciations, and demonstrated the strength and vigour of a united Europe and its principles.

The second thing I wanted to stress in paying tribute to the work done in recent years is the effective multilateralism that we have defended. It has to be said, five years ago, we had to work with an American power that is normally, and has thankfully once more become, the guarantor of a lot of balances and texts, that had decided to withdraw from most of the agreements it had contributed to building, for which it had worked hard, such as on the climate, with the Paris Agreement, or in the fight against nuclear proliferation, with the JCPOA. And so we were at a time of great fragility of multilateralism. Has everything been settled? Far from it, but I will come to that later. In the face of common challenges, while never losing sight of realities – and this will be one of the key themes of my words before you today – I believe we have collectively sought to preserve effective multilateralism by involving all actors, including governments, NGOs, civil society and companies.

To take just one of the latest examples, as what we have built collectively, with France’s diplomacy playing a key role, I have in mind the pandemic response. Just a few weeks after it broke out, we were at the forefront of the ACT-A initiative. With a few European partners, we worked with African States that, like us, were affected by the pandemic, but that were even more fragile. France was invited for the first time to an African Union Executive Council meeting to share a strategy. And between the African Union and, very soon, the G20, where we promoted it, we designed an unprecedented strategy to foster vaccine access, the development of production capacities, and the strengthening of health systems. In 2017 already, in light of the fragilities of the Paris Agreement and the American withdrawal, we had brought on board the whole network. And just as France succeeded in 2015 in bringing the world together to seal the Paris Agreement, we managed between 2017 and 2020 to preserve it. Several powers, you will remember, either had not signed it, or had not ratified it, and the United States had withdrawn. Now, the United States has decided to return, while Turkey and Russia have ratified it, regardless of the international context.

Back on 12 December 2017 at the One Planet Summit, we generated new momentum, creating coalitions of new actors involving governments, companies, NGOs and researchers, and attracting many American researchers through strong initiatives, to establish a tangible agenda for the climate. And we adopted the same method, which we then applied to climate finance and private finance. We adopted the same method for biodiversity, launching the same initiative for biodiversity, right here, in January 2021, in the light of the fumbling of the ongoing COP that, of course, had been affected by the pandemic.

Similarly, on the regulation of digital technology and content, we launched the Tech for Good Call in 2018, once again bringing on board the major international actors of the digital sphere and our diplomatic network to seek positive avenues for regulation. That was followed by the European regulations I mentioned, and we have gone further with the Christchurch Call to Action, launched here in Paris after the attacks in New Zealand, which means we are more capable today of fighting terrorist and hate content online.

We invented the Paris Peace Forum on the centenary of the armistice of the First World War, where project developers from around the world meet each year to build convergence, form new consensus and conceive new balances.

Nor have we let up at all in these times in the fight against inequalities, with our support for the Global Partnership for Education alongside Senegal, in organizing the Generation Equality Forum, in achieving tangible progress for women’s empowerment, girls’ education, the right to sexual and reproductive health, and the fight against violence, and in supporting the men and women who fight for freedom.

Throughout this period, we have also fought to protect fundamental rights by defending freedom of opinion and expression and access to reliable information through the Information and Democracy Partnership. We have

expression and access to reliable information through the Information and Democracy Partnership. We have committed to international justice and the fight against impunity alongside all humanitarian actors and have put this commitment into practice through our tangible support to fighting the war crimes committed on Ukrainian soil by Russia, to cite but one example. And I would like to thank all the humanitarian actors, correspondents and supporters, and volunteers who show great courage, some of whom paid the price with their lives two years ago in Niger.

We have also ensured that France has remained a balancing power in these times, helping limit disorders and build new partnerships with strong armed forces. And I think the armed forces are key to this strategy. With our strategic review in 2017, and the drafting of a military spending bill for 2019-2024 that has been respected right down to the slightest euro and has enabled us to repair capability shortfalls, we have rebuilt a strategy, I believe, that is better suited to the world's realities and is sure to make France's armed forces the leading European armed forces, to consolidate our nuclear deterrent, and to ensure we keep the role that is ours today, in support of our diplomacy.

We have, as a balancing power, put our partnership with Africa at the heart of our multilateral action, here again in a new rulebook, by involving Africa at the heart of the G7 Summit in Biarritz that France organized in 2019. Not simply inviting Africa to the last half day focused on what is called "outreach", but by involving it at the heart of the strategy, involving it in the preparation of all meetings and together supporting initiatives in the international arena by developing a Euro-African axis. We have also built this new partnership with Africa and I will have the chance to go back to this point, by looking at our past head on and in particular, by resuming our relationship with Rwanda, which is now an important partner in our initiatives on the continent.

Everywhere in the world, we have addressed crises by playing a full role, and I believe, as a permanent member of the Security Council, with the same determination every time to have a useful effect to prevent escalation and find diplomatic channels for conflict resolution. In doing so, we have stepped up our efforts to meet urgent humanitarian needs of our citizens and civilian populations in Ukraine, Syria, Afghanistan and Lebanon, and in recent days in Pakistan. This is just a quick and partial summary of our work. Focusing on a stronger Europe and with this effective multilateralism that we have contributed to preserving or saving, and helping to build new balances, you can be proud of what we have collectively accomplished in recent years.

France has not done everything alone, nor has it come up with all the concepts. We have been the driving force behind some, in any case we have always been at the forefront of countries promoting goodwill. And this is what I believe we should be proudest about, with the constant aim of finding the most effective ways to bring people together – an aim we should keep in the coming years – for the sake of effectiveness. Let's forget that the idea came from here, if for it to be spread, it should be perceived as originating from many sources, which is what must be done everywhere. It is much better. But I believe that your action to defend France's interests, our convictions, our wish to exert our influence and our appeal – and I will come back to this point – have been absolutely key at this time.

It is also why, since 2017, I have wanted all the means of our international action to be consolidated and adapted. Through the Act of 4 August 2021 – I wish to commend the presence, Minister Colonna, of your predecessor and our continuity of action – through the Act of 4 August 2021, we have officially set out a growth trajectory for our official development assistance which will be pursued over the course of this second five-year term. We have wanted to use these means to make our diplomacy agile again and a driving force, as I know that many of you have felt that those things had been lacking. We have engaged and will continue to pursue a structuring evolution to move from a development policy – which we had already begun to change but not visibly enough to our partners – to a solidarity investment policy, which has enabled us to take action with a greater number of countries, international organizations, companies, and members of civil society. And above, with this will to build partnerships as equals, in Africa in particular but more widely. Therefore, we have, through this text, provided very strong means, and ended several years of decreasing our official development assistance, but above all have provided fresh momentum for a new philosophy. The Ministry champions this philosophy as do supervising ministries, since the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of the Economy and Finance have a crucial role in this regard. And the AFD, the leading agency for this action, also has a crucial role with the philosophy which is behind "shared finances" and which has also helped restructure our action and step it up through the network of relations with development banks and regional banks from across the globe. And I believe that this action is the beginning of a new rulebook, but which mean much stronger, powerful action worldwide.

Yet this is not enough. That is why in 2023 for the first time in at least three decades, your administration, that of the Foreign Ministry, will see the number of its jobs increase at the same time as its financial means continue to grow. For the first time in three decades. I am aware of your expectations and your commitment to serving the country. Therefore I want to express to you today all of my confidence that your energy and that your foreign policy will be effectively implemented to serve France's interests. I am also aware of the fact that the necessary adaptation of government action that we have begun may have upset you. Our diplomacy is already the work of people from many backgrounds and whose skills do not come from their belonging to a corps, but

from their experience and their ability to perform many professions at the same time. And I would like to make one very simple clarification: defending a profession, which is what I do very deeply, and to which I am committed as you are, has never meant defending a corps. And therefore defending a profession is essential, and I say this in a Ministry that is one of the most open to everything interministerial, incorporating already a huge number of talented people in prestigious positions who come from other ministries, which is a practice that must become more widespread in other ministries. What the reform of senior government officials must expand is the consolidation of sectors of expertise and professions that are critical to the success of our diplomatic action. They concern professions that have their specific features. They concern the talented people we are training, and we continue to train and whose careers we are building. It is important to continue to do so even more effectively. And then, it is important to deploy even more widely these talented people within the government, because we need them, and better incorporate technical skills from other backgrounds into our diplomacy, and you are perfectly aware of this. And this reform must enable us to have a more agile diplomacy where – the pandemic has shown us, similar to what I mentioned for example regarding digital technology regulation – it is important that we combine the specific skills of the profession of diplomat with extremely specialized knowledge in technologies, social media and epidemiology. And therefore, it is time to build the capacity of extremely mobile and useful task forces and to learn how to use the skills of the profession of diplomat to the best advantage that we know how to develop and that is one of France's strengths, together with their highly technical expertise. We cannot settle for having competent generalists everywhere. This is not the case, but we should further strengthen this coherence and this strength of our action. It is this philosophy that will guide us.

That is why I am encouraging you to fully own this reform which is in my opinion a good one, particularly for the Foreign Ministry so that it can truly be the interministerial leader of international action. And it is also that, which will allow, where for several years, if not decades, there has been a sort of gradual temptation, due to the increasingly technical matters internationally, to seek a sort of international irredentism where each ministry has taken over international subjects from the Foreign Ministry. It is through this reform as well that we restore coherent action whereby the Foreign Ministry will ensure this interministerial role implementing effective synergy and knowledge, yet clearly taking the lead.

I am asking you in this regard to contribute to the reform under the authority of the Minister and all of her staff, so that our diplomacy is even better, more agile, more skilled and stronger. I have asked the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs to work on this with you in liaison with our elected officials and the Parliament at the diplomacy conference which is to start in a few weeks, regarding the missions and the organization we need in order to move forward. This must be done in the same spirit of responsibility and professionalism that I have seen you show in positions abroad. The same spirit of level-headedness and objectiveness, the same proactive attitude, because it is time for collective reflection and because we are also facing such intimidating and pivotal changes in the world that in a way, each of us has above all the duty to be even better at serving French citizens, and to be more effective.

All of this, I am saying to benefit France in these unusual times. Allow me, at this point in my speech, to try in all modesty, to describe to you the times we are currently living at a global level. I think that I have said here previously, as have my predecessors, that the times in which we are living are exceptional, and every time this is undeniable. However, I believe that there is a growing amount of evidence regarding our situation this year. And there is something about the times in which we are living that reflect both very far-reaching and long-term trends, but also acceleration due to the multiplication of crises and especially the return of war on European soil. This is not an event that should be isolated from the rest, but has happened as almost a logical consequence, a catalyst of many phenomena at work.

With a reasoning that is undoubtedly very incomplete and partial, but with the intention of building a few bricks, I will attempt to tell you how I see things regarding this issue. First, as I was saying, the times in which we are living have revealed serious trends. The world in which we are living has extraordinary forces, and I do not want to start with disaster scenarios. We are living in a world that for decades has lifted record numbers of our citizens out of poverty – the system in which international trade is organized has made this possible for the past few decades. It has driven innovation and its being distributed in an unprecedented manner. Never has humanity invented a vaccine to deal with a pandemic – in less than a year – and made it accessible to a substantial portion of human beings so quickly, with inequalities we saw at play, but also with action to try to curb them at the earliest opportunity.

We have also seen an unprecedented global interconnection which is a strength – it benefits intelligence, innovation, this distribution – and which provides a universal conscience to many countries and public opinions. But I will not list here every source of optimism in the world in which we are living, but only note that we have been thrust into a basically paradoxical situation. Never before has the national arena been so connected to the international arena. Never have the problems we need to solve been essentially global and never has the global order been so divided and increasingly so at such a fast pace. That is our main problem.

It is this difficult backdrop that has made the war started by Russia in Ukraine more tragic. Let me explain. There is a growing interdependence of our economies and our public opinions with the rest of the world because of the innovations that I have just mentioned, and which have profoundly changed our societies and our democracies. Our economies are open and interdependent. Our people travel, and therefore our countries are interdependent in every respect and we are connected with the rest of the world. We compare, we know, we are informed. This all makes for huge changes for our countries and the established order. We have experienced this directly with the pandemic that put the entire world on hold and disrupted all the value chains all at once, over the long term, a pandemic that has spread incredibly fast, which is the result of the globalization that we had been experiencing. And as I said, this pandemic over time has broken up the value chains – and I will come back to this point – and has plunged 78 million global citizens into poverty.

The climate crisis is a global problem that affects us all, and we have experienced its disruption in recent weeks in France, we have seen the tragedy taking place in Pakistan, Lake Chad and many other countries. The latest IPCC report has shown that almost half of humankind now live in the danger zone, and that many ecosystems have already reached the point of no return. This means that climate change and of course the vulnerability of our biodiversity are a global phenomenon that affects all of our societies deeply, and disrupts our organization. It is already affecting us, as it has begun to cause migrations and will be the main source of migrations in the coming years. It will also be the source of international rebalancing, considering the magnitude of its impact.

Similarly, what we previously thought to be a spontaneous adjustment of the world and the “invisible hand”, energy and food, to name just two, are once more deep geopolitical issues, as a consequence of the crises. This was already true to a certain extent, but now it is resolutely and overtly so. It is a complete change to our agenda. This means including for our countries: Europe is experiencing it, in the flesh; some neighbouring countries are worse off than us, as we can rely on the strength of our energy mix and model. But this means that what was assumed to be self-evident is a new source of dependencies.

Security risks, which have an international scope today even more than in the past, are causing instability in several regions. I particularly have in mind nuclear proliferation at a time when the Tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which has been a cornerstone of our security architecture for 50 years, has just ended in failure. I am also thinking of the terrorist threat, which remains high in Africa and the Middle East and is fuelled by destabilization, inequalities and the growth of poverty and climate disruption, because the impacts of all of these major global phenomena are compounded.

I should also mention – without even being exhaustive – demographics, which will hugely structure geopolitics in the coming years. It is already occurring in Europe, implicitly through deep shifts and the demographic decline happening in many Eastern countries. But especially at a time when humankind has never been so populous, with deep imbalances which have set in between the continents and which will increase in the coming years. I’m saying it here, to mention just some of the challenges we are facing. But as you can see, all challenges have a deeply international dynamic, which seals the interdependence of our weaknesses, our challenges, our national agenda, with our ability to overcome them on the international stage. Under no circumstances whatsoever can we resolve problems and provide effective, lasting solutions to these issues at the level of the nation alone. We can only do that if there is a strong national order and if there is established cooperation with shared objectives. Nonetheless – and this is the paradox I mentioned – rarely, in our contemporary era, have the frameworks, structures and standards of the international order been so shaken up and weakened.

We must be clear-sighted about the situation we are in, even if the reality is cruel for us, and without weakening ourselves. The economic order; open, liberal capitalism, which was a strength, and continues to be, I believe, bringing millions of global citizens out of poverty, has become disrupted. And trust in it is no longer the same, at home and abroad. That is a reality. It became disrupted during the financial crisis when the unthinkable happened. It became disrupted in the resolution of the financial crisis when those who suffered the most were the middle classes, especially in Europe, so there was a form of de facto injustice in how the crisis was resolved. And it weakened the international consensus on this model, and ultimately, its expansion within our borders and beyond them.

The reality of the climate crisis that I mentioned and the biodiversity crisis have also shown, along with the inequalities in our societies, that this model is no longer sustainable, because it could no longer let so many externalities be managed by others. The climate and social equilibrium are externalities of the financial model, which have not been reincorporated into it. And the third episode that deeply fractured it was the pandemic. There again, another unthinkable occurred. Suddenly, everything closed and our economies endured the experience of autarky. Then they realized that it wasn’t possible. They realized that it wasn’t sustainable. But they also realized that the weaknesses linked to “perfect” international trade, where, in a way, there were no strategic goods because it was believed that there would be free movement forever, was no longer true. So the reality was that the pandemic broke apart production chains. It re-regionalized, and sometimes re-nationalized certain production chains. And I believe that it deglobalized a significant portion of global production for the long term. That is the first reality that fractures the international economic order. whether we like it or not.

long term that is the first reality, that restores the international economic order, whatever the time it takes. Which makes it difficult to solve part of the problem.

The second factor, is that at the same time, the political liberalism which was central to this project, and here again I'm looking at the reality of the world, is increasingly disrupted. It was a somewhat twinned issue, as the reality is that our democracies progressed on the basis of political and social consensus, the primacy of the rational, free individual, an open political system and the rule of law, and progress guaranteed for the middle classes. But we are experiencing the beginning of a period of illiberalism. And the sense of purpose that we were immersed in since 1990, which was the extension of our values, our legal systems and our political systems, is no longer a reality. The capacity to convince or enforce it as an undisputable model, and which would be the culmination of humanity – I'm saying it now, no longer works. That is the modest, lucid experience of discussions with many Heads of State and Governments from several continents. Because it is disrupted at home, first of all, and because many are saying to us: "Is this model so great? You seem so unhappy. We watched what happened at the Capitol last year, we can see you at home, extremism is on the rise everywhere. You can't solve extreme poverty. You're arguing over the climate." I'm not acting as an advocate, I am just stating that this is a reality. We will have to solve it, and it is a major challenge for us because I believe, nonetheless, and most importantly in the universality of the values that are ours and the combats that France has engaged in when it helped build humanism and most of all, the values of the Enlightenment that governed it. But we cannot deny that today, things are more fractured and we are in a time of weakness.

The third factor is the assertion of authoritarian powers that create instability, which we struggle to keep in check or counter: In Iran, we can see the problems that are ours, and I hope in the coming days that the nuclear deal will be concluded. In Russia, a permanent member of the Security Council, a nuclear power, which is deliberately violating the United Nations Charter in an openly imperialistic manner. It is a profound change. But the fact that through the law, and through power plays, and the balance of deterrence capabilities in recent years, that we have not collectively succeeded in containing these powers of instability, or keeping them in check, is obviously a problem that weakens the international order.

And the fourth point, all of which are linked but this one is no less important, is that in an increasingly obvious manner – this will become increasingly structuring and despite current events we must not lose sight of it: geopolitics are gradually being structured around competition between the United States and China. This competition is problematic for us in several respects. First, because it encourages China, and we can see it at work, to redefine the international rules of play by establishing a narrative that says that these rules are centred on the US power and that what had previously been a universally established consensus is now something that they can legitimately contest. By offering solutions and values that correspond better to several of the world's geographic regions. So in a way there is a competition of universalism occurring. China, in doing this, seeks to build an international order that suits its own interests, in competition with that of Washington D.C., which was the guarantor of last resort, but which was also our own international order in every respect. This weakens the capacity of the international order.

However, there is one thing in this context that is clear: it is the strength of French foreign policy and of our Nation, and I believe it. We have never been aligned behind or the vassals of any global power. We have partners, we have allies, we have converging values with the United States of America which are strong, but we have always kept our independence, and I will come back to that. Today's threat is that everyone is being ordered to choose a side, and this competition structures, deeply fractures and weakens international initiatives. We have seen this competition at work even within the World Health Organization, in the midst of the crisis. All of this to say that – and once again I am presenting only a partial overview – the ability of the international order to take action collectively on consensus that are established and shared by all, despite partial disagreements, has weakened in the past ten years. That is a statement of fact. And at the very time that we need more cooperation, to solve the problems that are also ours and those of the planet's, the capacity to produce action has weakened. Therein lies our challenge.

It is in this context that Russia's war against Ukraine and the return of war to European soil, takes a very particular shape and I believe is a time of deep transformation for us, our continent and the international order. The invasion of Ukraine by Russia is a break away from the past because it directly affects our security in the context I have just mentioned. It violates and undermines the principles upon which we built peace over decades: the territorial integrity of States, their sovereign equality, the United Nations Charter. It makes international crisis resolution even more difficult because of the deep divide in the United Nations Security Council and the deconstruction of the treaties and frameworks of our security architecture. So it compounds what was already underway.

It is also a break from the past because of the nature of this war and the global consequences that it brings and the power of its consequences on energy, food, immigration, global information – we can see it in our opinions. Already this war, for which we are doing our utmost to prevent it from becoming a global war – I will come back to this – is a hybrid, globalized war. It is the first hybrid war in which what had been theorized a few years ago –

hybrid warfare – is being used, in the techniques employed by Russia. This started with the intervention in Belarus and the manipulation of migration several months before the war, and the intervention of this hybridity and the levers I just mentioned globalized the conflict. It means we are plunged into a war of narrative and of interpretation, because Russia wants to use the context I just mentioned, and establish a contemporary relativism where, with the undermining of the universalism of our values and the consensus that existed up until now on the principles of the international order, which were already weakened or shaken for some, it invokes rationality, logic, and changes the system of blame, placing it all on NATO, and adopts and fully legitimizes its own intervention, with an unrelenting rationale. In doing so, Russia adds the finishing touches to an effort underway to weaken, which is extremely dangerous for the international order and the inner workings of our democracies.

And it adds the danger of a deflagration with global impact to the list of existing imbalances. And in essence, it means that these fractures and divides which I mentioned could become completely irreversible. It also creates further profound imbalances. It exacerbates the North-South divide, first because we must look at all the countries which abstained, despite our appeal for each country to decide. In a way, this revealed doubts about a consensus which had perhaps been thought much stronger. It is a reality upon which we must act, which I will discuss in a moment, because over 1.7 billion people around the world are directly impacted by the increased prices of food, energy and many more items in the weeks ahead.

And as a result this war could hasten and in fact is already hastening these divides, but also the global divide, triggered, in a way, by Russia, the destabilizing power which will expedite this division between the United States and China. Because China remains in the shadows, and having structured the abstentionist side, is now seeking to further its deep interests and to effect a readjustment, or in any case a split in the international order which is absolutely not in our interests and which we must prevent. In any event, the forces seeking to achieve this are at work. And the tensions in the Taiwan Strait in recent weeks are lending a certain relentlessness to this agenda.

So it is indeed this reality, in the context which I have just set out, that we must face: a war of annexation on our doorstep, led by a nuclear power, a permanent Member of the Security Council, alongside a hybrid war, deployed globally and the historic deconstruction of the frameworks for regulating globalization and relationships between nations. That sums up the war in Ukraine. And I say this forcefully as it is a drastic change for our country and our diplomacy. The time when we could hope to reap the rewards of peace is over, and I believe for long into the future, because we will have to defend peace and rebuild it. Now is no longer a time when we can enjoy our freedoms without paying a price for it. We must cherish our freedom, our values, but we must defend them, fight for them and accept all the consequences when others are fighting for them on our behalf. This is exactly what is happening today in Ukraine. And the time when the international order defined in the wake of World War II, and then consolidated after the Cold War, was at the heart of international relationships is now gone, and must be rebuilt.

That is the situation and, to my mind, the essence of these times. But as you know, it must not lead to pessimism or hopelessness. The challenge ahead is immense. And so to rebuild, we truly need a combative diplomacy and to try to very clearly define a few principles and objectives to prevent the undermining process which I have described from continuing so that the war does not spread or speed up the ongoing events and international chaos which I described. That is today's challenge, which is the challenge of France and its diplomacy.

It is a challenge we must meet at a very basic level, but in these complex times I think it is always useful to recall simple things. I would just like to explain what I believe are a few constants and methods to build this diplomacy and to set three main objectives. It will not be an exhaustive list, but I think it will put us on the right track. I want us to keep the constants and the methods in mind, and they are first and foremost respect for the sovereignty of each State and its territorial integrity. I think that this is very important. First because it is currently our best argument against Russia. Sometimes, we, the West, have expressed doubts about these issues in the very name of our values. Sometimes, through our actions, we have given others reason to blame us for this. I want this to be clear: for me, that is a constant. The destiny of a people cannot be changed by replacing them. Coalitions can be built to make them change their leaders, pressure can be applied, useful action can be taken. Over time, mechanisms can legitimately be examined to do this effectively. I believe in regional coalitions, in pressure from multiple stakeholders. Together, we must re-assess our sanctions mechanism based on our current actions and the results we achieve in the months and years ahead. But I must clearly state that the sovereignty of people and the territorial integrity of States are constants.

The second thing in this complex world is that at every step, we must stand by the fact that we still talk to all parties. If diplomacy were the art of speaking to people we agree with, I would not have needed to set out our ambitions for the network as I did earlier, as we would need much fewer embassies and resources. But we must fully accept this and not give in to any form of false morality which would render us powerless. Who would want Turkey to be the only global power, and only NATO member if I may recall, still talking to Russia? And in the future, that the same people who forget to criticize it, can say "It's marvellous, look how strong Turkey is

future, that the same people who forget to criticize it, can say "It's marvelous, look how strong Turkey is, France is not even able to build peace." Meaning that every day, you end up asking it to stop talking! Yes, the profession of diplomacy is indeed to talk to everybody, including and above all people we disagree with. And so we will continue to do so, but here too, using a simple agenda. We have coalitions, we have allies, we are defending coherence with our allies. That is why, as a NATO Member State, we agreed on sanctions with the other members. And we are not one of the NATO Member States which failed to impose sanctions and will continue trading with Russia. That is all I will say on that issue, but since it took place amid a deafening silence, it is worth recalling. We have alliances, action coalitions. We are coherent, but we must uphold our freedom to act, to hold dialogue for useful action.

And thirdly – and I believe this is one of the strengths of our network, it is inherent within it – I think we will increasingly have to build balanced partnerships on an equal footing. Immense structures with overarching powers attempting to subjugate others no longer work. They are increasingly ineffective. But I will return to the idea of building regional or bilateral partnerships in which balances are very respectfully redefined, with a different agenda. I believe that sport, culture, which I will return to later, and gastronomy, which are known as soft power, are key components in order to act effectively and further supplement our goals.

It is a combination of constants and principles of method. I would like to recall them here so that it is clear to everyone and we can move forward. Then, I would like to set three simple goals, which come under coherent action, because I think that our work in recent years was not orthogonal, quite the contrary, given what is occurring before our eyes.

I believe that the primary goal of our diplomacy is to defend France's strength, influence and independence. It is the primary goal, and sometimes when there is only one goal to follow, that is it. It is coherent and confirms the close relationship between our national and international goals. First because there can be no strong diplomacy without a strong economy. That is not true. As I said earlier, people look at you, they look at your armed forces. And we have that. They look at your economy. We have ended a long period of deindustrialization. I am proud that we are leaders in terms of start-up creation and development. We are in the process of reindustrializing. But the work is far from complete. Diplomacy must serve this agenda, now and in the future. Because the stronger our country is economically, the more we will be able to exert our influence, to establish and develop our strength. And so in this regard, I would like to commend the work achieved in recent years by all operators, by the entire network, because I like to see coherence on the ground also. We have agencies but on the ground, it is the ambassador who leads the various ambassadors. All over the world, France has a single presence. And then, it can use levers, the diplomatic network, its cultural advisers and the instruments at its disposal, like the AFD, Business France, etc. That is very important. And that is all I will say on that issue. But a lot of work has been done, for which I thank you.

I want us to continue working faster on our attractiveness. And so we will clearly maintain the well-known Choose France summit. We will continue promoting our economic strength but also our cultural, sporting and gastronomic strength because I believe that the synergy of these agendas is very powerful. And with regard to strength, we cannot only act independently, as major companies are like citizens, they are seeking an experience. France represents values, it is a relationship with beauty which fuels its attractiveness. All this has a lot of synergies, and we have been able to develop it perfectly. And let me tell you: it works much better to hold Choose France in Versailles, to be able to talk culture, to introduce the people leading our major cultural projects all at the same time, to explain our reforms, that is an advantage which France has over many other countries. And I can emphasize that ten years from now, that will work better than in remote outposts, to bring people together near Paris in sumptuous settings. And so we will continue, but I believe that this attractiveness agenda is absolutely vital. And so I truly want to commend the work of those who have driven it. But I ask you to continue working even harder. Similarly, developing our food diplomacy and tourism industry is absolutely vital. And there too, the role of Business France, Atout France, initiatives for food, awards we created, the work done has been absolutely necessary, it is not a side activity because this too has a huge amount of synergies with the others.

Next, I want us to be able to continue developing our foreign trade strategy to serve this economic agenda. I would just like to carry out two actions to boost everything already being done. I am surprised to often see – you may point out that the President's delegations are my best examples of what I will not reveal here, but together we have a lot of habits – the same companies on my delegations and on some trips, I notice that they are not necessarily those most in need of my help to set up abroad. And then afterwards, I sometimes even check, does that create a lot of jobs in France? And they are not always the companies which have created the most jobs in France. And so I think we must realign these agendas so that this is understood and supported by the people of France. We need to give much more support – and we have started to do so in recent years – to small and medium-sized enterprises and mid-caps on an international level. That is where we must make a difference. And it is what we managed to do by creating a synergy between the French public investment bank and Business France: the network is vital. And as we know, we can change the lives of an SME or a French territory by bringing it on a ministerial trip, or if an embassy takes an initiative, much more so than if we bring a major company. And so this work has been well underway in recent years. But it still must be speeded up to

multiply this support strategy which, I believe, perfectly and automatically demonstrates the strength of our network and the impact it can have for economic stakeholders in France. If I may say, they will then be your best ambassadors.

Next, I would like us to make our foreign trade strategy consistent with France 2030. We are investing heavily not just in several innovative sectors but also in transforming our creative, agricultural and industrial fabric. It is of absolutely key importance for the network to support the France 2030 priorities, because that is how we will quickly have players at the right level and who will find the right partners. It is what will allow us also to better serve certain agricultural SMEs, for example, which are at the heart of these projects, and our cultural and creative industries which in my opinion are a key part of what we can do in this respect.

Lastly, a point on how to help make France stronger and contribute to its influence and outreach. Beyond what I have said, we need to completely embrace a strategy focusing on France's influence and outreach. Some say the way we project ourselves abroad is outdated. I personally like the word "influence"; we should embrace it. Influence simply consists in explaining who we are and being able to promote it whilst respecting one another and accepting that there is not necessarily, so to speak, an unbalanced relationship. It means explaining who we are. It is central to our strategy and makes France stronger, more understandable to the rest of the world and therefore more influential in the end. So, beyond what I said about our strategy of economic attractiveness, our foreign trade strategy, I want us to continue the work begun and step it up on schools and education. Our reform of the Agency for French Education Abroad, the AEFE, which I want to pay tribute to here, was absolutely clear and allowed us to step things up by changing the framework. It may sometimes have upset people, because we embraced what was sometimes a reality on the ground, but we made it a real network not just to educate our children everywhere abroad – and we know there are places we have to help do better – but also very often to educate children from other countries across the world who would like access to the French language and the quality of our education. It is a huge strength. So we are going to go on investing in, supporting and stepping up cooperation projects, just as I want us to further increase our academic cooperation projects with players in countries which are key for us on this.

The other point concerns culture, which I briefly mentioned. The network has a key role alongside the Institut Français, which is also the umbrella organization in this field. And I am grateful for the active efforts of all staff to enable us to build cultural projects all over the world. You do this every day, but I would like us to give it fresh impetus. We have managed to do this in recent years, we can see how powerful it is in many countries I have visited recently, particularly in Africa. But I want these cultural projects to be based on the philosophy of equal partnership, and also on the risks we have taken collectively. The profound change of philosophy which France has promoted around return of artworks is a remarkable opportunity for cultural and creative partnership. Benin is the best example of this. The restitution of the 26 Abomey treasures did not just enable what in my opinion was an act of justice and scientific and cultural coherence. It also nourished contemporary creativity, which was then circulated and showcased in France. And this is what we have to do everywhere, because it profoundly changes the way many countries, their publics and young people, view France. In this respect, we also have to step up our cooperation around the cultural and creative industries and heritage, and using forms of partnership, here too, which we are renewing our focus on. This is what was done several years ago now under François Hollande's authority with the International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas, ALIPH, which I think offers France tremendous outreach in the heritage sector in crisis and war zones and, precisely, have this scientific and cultural power. This is what we are doing with francophonie, where we have acknowledged, in a way, that its epicentre and key players today are probably African countries – and as I have said several times, the epicentre is in the Congo Basin – but with France taking on a role here too, supporting translation projects, projects recognizing and defending writers, working on public opinion and creativity, and also the promotion of our values and diplomatic agenda – but by other means. And also with strong initiatives such as Villers-Cotterêts, which we shall be launching in spring 2023, where we will have a project at the heart of France with not just a museum, but also a place of research, education and creativity for the French language. And not just in France but worldwide. So, as you can see, this series of initiatives – and again, I am not being exhaustive here – is key to this strategy of influence for France and places culture at the heart of the agenda.

Our sport must also be at the heart of this influence agenda, because the opportunity we seized to organize the Olympic and Paralympic Games in France in 2024 is an unprecedented moment mobilizing the whole of our network. Firstly because we shall have a unique event in terms of diplomacy and protocol held in Paris, Seine-Saint-Denis, Marseille, French Polynesia and all the areas involved for it. But above all, we have to lay groundwork and establish a sport and education strategy at the heart of our diplomacy, because this is also a vehicle for our influence and our ability to speak differently to public opinions and certain countries. With Africa, Asia and Latin America, the sport and education strategy is an opportunity to create joint projects, as the Ministry has done through the AFD among others, but it is a complete change of perspective, with other actors. It is the ability we have through sport to also promote our diasporas, and this is also a complete change in the way France is perceived. So the creative power behind these initiatives means that – this is why I am putting so much emphasis on it – these are by no means trivial issues.

As you can see, this strategy of influence to serve a stronger France – embracing gastronomy, education, culture and sport – is absolutely central to our network's missions. It helps change perspectives. It makes us stronger, it gives us many more openings with civil societies, and helps forge other inter-civil society connections for a country like France, which has such strong diasporas. And it is also a means for our diasporas to demonstrate their strength for and by themselves.

Speaking of influence, I also want to talk here about a more defensive lever, and this is a new mission of the past few years which must be central to the network's missions. The world has changed, as I mentioned, and our country is often attacked. It is attacked in public opinions via social media and through misinformation. The African continent is the ideal testing ground for this. So, with everything I have just said, I want us to tackle, as it were, the underlying elements. With a genuine policy of partnership which includes culture, sport and promotion of the diaspora, we will remove, so to speak, what underpins Russia's, China's and Turkey's narrative whereby France is a neo-colonial country which puts its army on their soil. This is what is happening. So the claims we are letting them use must be demolished, as it were.

We must be much more aggressive and active on the subject. This is why in recent years we have created a post of ambassador specifically devoted to the issue, which is absolutely crucial and, in my opinion – as I have just mentioned – key. It allows us, precisely, to work on public diplomacy in Africa, to set up our narrative and present our arguments. I think that collectively we have to be much more reactive, much more mobilized on social media, and work with allies and partners of France on public opinions. Not just to counter this false information, of course, but to put a stop to it very clearly, as swiftly as possible and promote our own action.

In this respect, we must make much better use of the France Médias Monde network, which is absolutely key and must be a strength for us. I believe we have to rethink our shared approach collectively. Because there is sometimes a conceptual gap between the idea of independence we have within our borders, which is wholly legitimate on the part of journalists and newsrooms, and the reality these same newsrooms see on the ground when there is real anti-French propaganda. We need communication instruments which say when France is being wrongly attacked, which say what France is doing and publicize our action: that of our writers, our artists, our sportspeople and our diplomats. Today, we are too passive, and not active enough. So we need a profound change in the way we think, in our organization and tools. We have begun that and it is very consistent with what we are doing nationally, too, because we suffer the consequences and because such propaganda is now very active at home.

But I really am counting on all of you and the network to mobilize when it comes to this strategy of influence and, as you can see, counter-influence too, in order to combat false narratives and false information and defend what we are actually doing. It is not about spreading propaganda; for some it means defending free information in a structured framework – I will come back to this – and for others it means defending even stronger arguments everywhere, and you will be given the wherewithal to carry out joint action. As you will have understood, I think this is a key point.

Defending and making France stronger and more influential requires this effort and all these elements which I expect from the network. It also requires efforts from our diplomacy at European level, precisely to strengthen this independence. We are at a key moment which is going to structure our action, particularly at European level, on this aspect. We have started doing this, we have laid the foundations, but we will have to go much further. At the Versailles Summit a few months ago, under the French Presidency, we agreed to generalize the agenda that France had been promoting since 2017 on this. The coming months and years will be key to building our energy and technological sovereignty. This is absolutely key. We have the means to do so, but here too this is a profound change and Europe is the right vehicle.

We must not choose between energy sovereignty and climate. We must do both at once and it is at European level that we can do that. That is why we will have a very proactive agenda to defend in this area in order to end our energy dependence on Russia, speed up the implementation of our climate ambitions, obviously reduce our use of fossil fuels, diversify our supplies and speed up our transition strategy.

What does this involve? Having a real "energy Europe", then a real "electricity grid Europe", which is one of the areas where we agree with Germany. But I also say very strongly that France will have to defend an agenda which does not involve recreating other dependencies. When I hear that hydrogen could be substituted for gas, yes, if we produce hydrogen. But if gas is replaced with hydrogen – certainly a cleaner resource – which is produced elsewhere, no! We will be recreating the geopolitical dependencies we are paying the price for now. We have both renewable and nuclear energy and a strategy which will carry it through over time, we have the possibility of producing decarbonized energy – but it must be a European ambition. And so we shall have to be vigilant in Europe to ensure that, in the light of the crisis we are experiencing, no new energy dependencies emerge. And that, for me, is central to France's missions.

With regard to critical commodities: semiconductors, health, food and the digital sector, we will also have to

With regard to critical commodities, commodities, health, food and the digital sector, we will also have to construct an enhanced European autonomy agenda. We have already begun doing that, but it will be vital in the months to come. Likewise, in order for France to achieve this independence, we will have to complete our work on security and migration issues and defence issues at the European level. We began doing this under the French Presidency with the Schengen overhaul and the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, to strengthen protection together in solidarity in response to migration crises. Much remains to be done to better forestall arrivals and better organize cooperation on returning migrants to their countries of origin, and – above all, and as we are well aware – to harmonize and approximate our reception and asylum systems.

In the area of defence, we will have to strengthen our European defence capabilities by increasing joint expenditures and encouraging joint projects. Let me be very clear: France will have a three-tiered strategy. The first tier is national. That is why I asked the Minister for the Armed Forces and the Joint Chief of Staff to design a strategic exercise that will be completed by late September. A review of the Military Programming Act will follow, by the end of the year or the beginning of next year, that will upon completion give rise to a bill that should reach Parliament in early 2023. Here too, we must take new realities and needs into account.

The second tier obviously relates to Europe, with the consolidation of new cooperation and greater coherence, something that is absolutely necessary. If each European nation is to spend more, that should not be to buy non-European. Here too, we must steadily break away from a pattern of dependency. That is crucial to our ability to take strategic action and resist norms imposed from outside Europe. It would be absurd for a continent to make massive investments in an economic situation like today's, to buy elsewhere and deprive itself of our freedom of action. We will continue to double down on this, as it doesn't come automatically to all our partners, but in my view it is consistent with our goals.

The third tier concerns NATO. I believe we have collectively demonstrated that Defence Europe is not in competition with NATO, is not a replacement, but rather an additional pillar. Within the Alliance, we do not want to be mere vassal states that depend on a single power that has all the capabilities. With a stronger Europe, we can acknowledge that Europe sometimes needs to make its own security choices for its own soil and its own neighbourhood. I am glad we now have a president like President Biden, who shares our values and has put the United States back on the path of progressivism and cooperation with all of us. We paid the price for uncertainty. But can we suspend our collective security on the whim of the American voter? Personally, as someone who had to deal with the fallout, the answer is no. It is wonderful to have a strong, committed ally who is like-minded on many things and is ready to act. It's even better to be able to rally that ally to our side without being dependent upon it. This is what we are trying to establish within NATO. I see it as crucial. In this regard, I am pleased that in recent months Defence Europe has been consolidated, with Denmark's decision to join our common defence policies, and that NATO has been strengthened thanks to Sweden and Finland's sovereign decisions to join the Alliance.

Through these actions, we are strengthening and consolidating our independence. I would like to see this same push for independence at the geopolitical level. Europe is increasingly autonomous and sees itself more and more in geopolitical terms. But there is more to Europe than the EU. You have often heard me say that, if we fail to think of Europe beyond the European Union, then we condemn ourselves, ultimately the EU will be forced into union with wider Europe. We will have to choose between our shared policies, the proximity of States, and Europe's geopolitical coherence. Because of this tension and this reality, a few months ago I proposed the European Political Community, inspired by the confederation projects that France proposed shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Those who took part may correct me if I'm wrong, but those projects most likely did not get anywhere because to some they seemed too much like substitutes for enlargement for some, which they considered they were owed – I have in mind a number of countries that were on the other side of the European wall – and because Russia was to be a member from the outset. So you would be right to remind me that Russia was there because it had a leader who honoured it and had taken extraordinary political risks. Which brings me, at this point in my speech, to pay tribute to Mikhail Gorbachev for the historic actions he took during that time.

Nonetheless, on the basis of that experience and our current reality, the European Political Community should first of all hold meetings every six months attended not only by members of the EU, but also by the UK, Norway, Switzerland, the Western Balkans, Ukraine, and so on. Many other members have raised the question of Turkey, and it will be discussed. In any case, France has no veto to wield and hopes for a configuration as wide and inclusive as possible, in which EU institutions are not central to the project nor what structures it. Otherwise we will have reproduced the kinds of partnerships we are already familiar with, in which non-EU member states only come for loans or to join the club eventually. No, we must partner very closely with all these States, in a very intergovernmental manner, to build close strategic convergence on these key issues. We need to work with them on climate change, energy supplies, foreign and security policy, commodities and food security, meeting at least every six months. I can assure you that it will be a radical change, because it is what will allow us to stop the growing influence that, in the Western Balkans region, to take just one example, Russia or Turkey might have because we have insufficient contact at political level. It will also help me to put an end to the grumbles of non-recognition with regard to many of these States and governments. It will help end the

assumption of infinite expansion by the EU, which – given everything I've just said – needs to be stronger, more sovereign and more autonomous, and must resolve the problems it already has. But we need this geopolitical space.

I was delighted that Federal Chancellor Scholz got behind this idea in his Prague speech. Not only do I welcome his speech, I am also very pleased that, in October, the Czech Prime Minister will host the first meeting of the European Political Community, which I am certain will allow us to build new alliances, to devise other forms of continent-wide political cooperation, and to build the kind of Europe that is formed by both diversity and a shared will. It will give us an opportunity to discuss strategic projects, cultural projects, and many other things.

We must also assert Europe's independence in the confrontation between China and the United States – this will conclude my chapter on independence – with the same resolve I spoke of earlier. Independence is not the same as equidistance. I read what was said when I spoke about France's role as a "balancing power." We are independent: that is, on the one hand we have the United States, which is our ally; it is a great democracy with which we share common values and interests, but we do not want to be dependent upon it, as I have said. On the other hand, we have China, a systemic rival with which we do not share democratic values but with which we must continue to work in order to find answers to common challenges – such as the climate and biodiversity – and with which we continue to speak in order to try and settle regional crises and various destabilizing factors. France and Europe must therefore ensure their geopolitical independence with regard to the duopoly that is taking shape. We shall not be pushed on how to guide our policies. We must in all cases preserve our freedom of action, which goes hand in hand with our loyalty to alliances and coalitions.

That is also why we developed a strategy for the Indo-Pacific, to take just one example. We first developed a French strategy in the spring of 2018, and it eventually became Europe's strategy as well. There were some who viewed the disappointment – I have to call it that – of the AUKUS announcement as a sign of France's weakening. I saw it as a betrayal, essentially on the part of two leaders who will not be around to make decisions on behalf of their countries in the months and years to come. New leaders are coming who are ready to reconsider that strategy. But we are coherent: we are not willing to have a strategy of confrontation with China in the Indo-Pacific. Our strategy in the region is to preserve the freedom that comes with sovereignty, to protect our space – to protect our maritime space, I dare say, as much of it is located there – and to protect our citizens and our partners. So we are defending freedom and sovereignty. Working with India and Australia in particular, we want to curb hegemonic impulses in the region. We have a military, diplomatic and climate strategy. But we are not in a confrontational mind-set and we do not believe that alliances that have been established to deal with certain opposing interests should extend to the Indo-Pacific. That, to be quite clear, is what French geopolitical independence means in this context.

That is our first major goal: that of independence, which means we must work for a stronger, more influential, more independent France.

My second goal for our diplomacy is of course to work for peace and stability, to be the "balancing power" – ensuring multiple balances – that I spoke of a few years ago. Not because our role is to replace the UN Secretariat, but because there are certain places where it is in our interest to work for peace and stability. Because it is not in our interest for turmoil to spread; because it would harm our citizens; because it would threaten some of our alliances; and because we have partners and friends who are hurt by such imbalances.

The first place to pursue this goal is of course Ukraine, where Russia is waging its war. I will very clearly enumerate the goals of our diplomatic effort.

The first goal is to help Ukraine in this conflict that has been foisted on it. To help Ukraine in economic and humanitarian terms, and by delivering weapons that will help it confront the aggression and defend its territory, and to begin work on rebuilding the country right now. This is a simple goal, from a mind-set I made clear from the outset: we are not taking part in the war. We have no wish to take part in the war. We cannot let Russia win this war militarily and conquer territories, which would show defeat of our values and the international order through an aggression.

We want to establish conditions that will enable Ukraine, at a time of its choosing, to either achieve a military victory or a negotiated peace, in terms that would not simply be those it would be forced to accept if we abandoned it to its fate. That is our top goal: helping Ukraine for that purpose, and with that kind of determination. I must say that the assistance provided to Ukraine by the United States, European countries and certain others, along with the courage of its people and the strength of its army, have made the situation very different from what many top experts anticipated a few months ago, and especially – I think I can say this – very different from what Russia anticipated.

The second goal we need is that of maintaining European unity. We must not let Europe be divided in the face of this war. That is a challenge every day, as we do not have the same past experiences with Russia, because we do not have the same histories with Russia in our Europe. When we held the Presidency of the Council of the

do not have the same histories with Russia in our Europe. When we held the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, I was attentive to this point, but it is a daily challenge for us all. We cannot allow Europe to be divided or to align in a way with the most warlike, which would run the risk of an extension of the conflict and a total closure of lines of communication. Nor can we consider that we could allow certain European States on our eastern flank to carry out actions alone. The European Union is key. And if I may, dividing Europe is one of Russia's war goals. So it is precisely our responsibility to preserve the European Union and its strength in these circumstances.

The third goal is that we need to prepare for a long war. To do so, we obviously need to organize at national and European levels, particularly when it comes to energy, food and many other issues. But clearly, faced with this long war, we need to act in a way that avoids escalation and prepares peace. Avoiding escalation is, in my view, France's role: avoiding any nuclear escalation, or any geographical escalation. So we must do everything possible for countries not to get engaged in the conflict carelessly, leading to geographical extension. And we must do everything we can through our diplomacy to stop civil nuclear power, or nuclear threats, leading to a "vertical" escalation, some would say. In this respect, France has, as you know, been very active in the last few months, from the outset, since March when it comes to Chernobyl, and in recent days for civil nuclear power to be "protected", as it were, from the war, and we are seeking as far as possible, firstly to enable the competent international agency, the IAEA, to conduct its mission and to ensure the safety and security of the plant, and also to underline the sovereignty requirements around this nuclear plant in our framework. Preparing peace means continuing to talk in these circumstances, as I said, to all stakeholders, and so France will continue, as I did a few days ago and will do again after the IAEA mission, to talk to Russia, so as to prepare the terms of peace on each point where France's role is useful.

That means avoiding escalation at every moment in the conflict and, for example, talking about civil nuclear power. It also means preparing and working on the terms of the peace that will have to be negotiated, but accepting that the time will be determined by the two parties, in accordance with the constants and goals I have given. It is not for France, Europeans, or anyone else to choose on Ukraine's behalf what peace it wants, or when to negotiate it. But we need to do everything we can to ensure a negotiated peace is possible when the two protagonists sit at the table.

The fourth goal is to try to do everything possible to curb the partitioning of the world that is in train during this war, thus addressing what I have just described. We need to use the diplomatic network to seek and win the support of those who do not necessarily share our choices. We need to be clear: the countries that have openly supported Russia are few, and those countries are not the most respectable. We are in relation with them, but they have clear geopolitical choices, there are no surprises there. The great many countries that chose to abstain during the votes that were called in spring and summer may have reassured some commentators, but when you look at their demography, they represent a sizeable part of the world's population. That means that that sizeable part of the world's population does not fully understand what is going on, and in the dialogues we have with many African, Asian, Latin American or Pacific leaders, there is a discourse that says it is a regional war, of which they are suffering the effects without understanding exactly what is happening. Our job is first and foremost to stop a confusion taking root. This is an aggression by Russia, and a violation of the principles of the international order. I can say that there is no African public opinion that could support the violation of borders and popular sovereignty. African public opinions have grown out of decolonization on this point. And if we consider that that can be a new dogma of the international order, then good luck ensuring peace on the African continent in future. So we need to set down clear foundations again, otherwise we will sit back and allow a form of contemporary relativism to take root on this point. And you will see that we will face more and more upheaval.

So we need to reach out, explain how things came about, the reality of the facts, and why we are there. We are talking to Russia, but we disapprove of and are fighting the roots of this conflict. Secondly, we need to address their fears, difficulties and problems. That is the aim of the FARM initiative we launched, and why, in March, France promoted a food security initiative aimed at supporting food autonomy in many of these countries. We did that with Senegal, and the initiative was endorsed by the European Union and the African Union. Because if we do not show many of these countries that we are addressing the unwanted food consequences every day, they will cut us off eventually. We now need to do the same thing when it comes to fertilizers, which is absolutely crucial to develop agriculture in many of these countries, where there were vulnerabilities and dependencies precisely on Belarus and Russia. Then we need to gradually build coalitions, even imperfect ones, incomplete ones, with several of these countries. I have in mind India and China, South Africa, Ethiopia, Algeria, Senegal and Indonesia, to cite but a few, who may share some of the goals we need to set ourselves for this conflict, and in any case who may stand with us to avoid geographical extension of the conflict in Ukraine or tipping points that may come in the next few months. I think the role of our diplomacy, in this work to win over others, so to speak, above and beyond all those who are already on our side, is to work on a gradual rallying and to do everything possible to avoid a great partition where, ultimately, it would be, as some have put it, "the West against the rest".

There are many other crises which I could of course use to illustrate this role for France as a balancing power

and the importance of partnerships, from North Korea to work that many of you are doing alongside us on the Western Balkans and the Caucasus, and I could go into greater detail on what I was saying about the Indo-Pacific, but I will not do so here, as it would be even longer than what I am already subjecting you to.

I would like to simply take another theatre of operations as an example of what being a balancing power is about and this role that I ask you to play for peace and stability: Africa. France has played a key role in security for Africa, alongside many others, through its armed forces. I would like to pay tribute here to our armed forces, and to the choice by my predecessor François Hollande in 2013 to launch Operation Serval and then Operation Barkhane. To our armed forces, without which Mali would today no longer be a sovereign country with its territorial integrity intact, as a caliphate was taking root. And I would like to underline that France's intervention took place at the request of a sovereign State and a regional organization, ECOWAS. I want to commend the effectiveness of our armed forces which have, again in the last few days, hit many terrorists and terrorist groups hard, with the support of our services and our network. I wish to pay tribute to the memory of our soldiers lost in this theatre of operations and reach out to their families, and of course pay tribute to our wounded. All that was achieved bravely and effectively at the request of the President. And I want to congratulate our armed forces for the perfect execution of what I decided in January: the withdrawal from Mali because, quite simply, the political framework there was no more. A sovereign State no longer wanted us there, putting us in a position of insecurity, and no longer wanted to fight terrorism. We have reorganized our disposition and remain involved in the fight against terrorism in support of Sahel armed forces, centred essentially around Niger. That was done in a remarkably orderly fashion and finalized in mid-August. Thank you, and congratulations.

We need to learn lessons from what we have experienced. Our military power is key, and it ensures our credibility. Our institutional and political capacity to activate it when needed is crucial. Very few armed forces in Europe or the wider world could have decided so quickly to act. Very few. That is a strength for France, we must maintain that. But in the fight against terrorism in Africa in particular, we need to much more precisely define the desired goals from the outset, limit the duration of operations, and make them part of a policy. That is what we have sought to do over the last five years and had already done massively, considering that the useful effect sought was only possible if defence efforts were combined with diplomatic and state-building efforts, as well as inclusive investment and development efforts.

But above all, what we want to do is to rebuild this partnership with Africa, on the basis of what I said in November 2017 when I spoke before students at Joseph Ki-Zerbo in Ouagadougou. That means converging and taking action on the challenges we share, but doing so from a totally partnership-based perspective. So on security, that means acting at the request of States, in support of their armed forces, with a disposition that will be reorganized in the coming months. This means France will not have a disposition that has sometimes been in place for too long, but will be much closer to the African armed forces that want that, when they clearly express a need, with clear strategic goals and a framework. We are now building that with several regional countries, because that essentially concerns the Sahel and the Gulf of Guinea region, which face an expanding terrorist threat. What we have built, to take just one example, with Benin in recent months, is a very good illustration in this respect of what we want to do in future. What we have managed to forge with Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire, too, to form regional hubs for armed forces, to build academies, and enable African armed forces to act, is absolutely transformational and in line with this new security partnership. The key is to prioritize the security of civilian populations, and to be very clear about our commitment to the fight against terrorism, and also very clear on a point that I want to recall here very forcefully: never being involved in ethnic tensions and taking all communities into account in our approach.

With Africa, we also want this partnership to be consolidated when it comes to global challenges, and so we need to build Euro-African convergences and initiatives to bring other actors on board, as we have begun to do already. That is what we have started to do on certain climate issues, and also what we have started to do on the financing of African economies through the May 2021 Paris Summit, with an agenda for the financing of African economies. We have sought precisely to build a new approach where France advocated not only the issuing of special drawing rights from the IMF, but also the reallocation of 100 billion to African countries. That is absolutely key to revolutionizing models and is a powerful lever to encourage private investment and scaling-up. So we are working to mobilize the international community to change and transform financing mechanisms, to convince G20 powers to do so, and to make far greater use, through partnerships, of businesses in developed countries and businesses in Africa. That is the aim of the economic "new deal" we sealed here in spring 2021, and I would like to thank its authors. We want to continue through bilateral discussions, within the G20 and through a Choose Africa summit that we will organize in France early next year.

In this respect, this new partnership also needs us to move forward hand in hand with Africa's young people, as I was saying earlier, liaising with and involving our diasporas. We need to focus on the digital sector, the cultural and creative industries and sport in the renewal brought by this partnership. To that end, we will be organizing the Creative Africa event in June 2023, which should roam and be held across Africa. In summer 2024, meanwhile, we will inaugurate the "centre of African worlds", the fruit of the work carried out by the Ministry in close liaison with the AFD, Achille Mbembe and the experts he called on. The Centre will itself work in a

network with partner sites in France, Europe and Africa, with the Institut Français and our diplomatic network, but it will also recognize the role and strength of our diasporas in this strategy.

I deeply believe this new partnership will allow us to work without demands or interference, or perceived interference, in liaison with our diasporas, to support actors who think and act to make democracy an attractive model in Africa. That is the task of the Fund for Innovation for Democracy that has just been set up. I would like to thank Professor Mbembe for agreeing to lead it. As you can see, this is a fundamental strategy and, as I said in Ouagadougou, and as I said before you in 2018, it is a conversion of gaze, a total change of method and approach. The additional resources that we have provided aim to serve this change, a literally different approach that is much more cooperative and which also involves many more actors, and which will also require us to take much more ramified, partnership-focused strategies that involve other forces but also correspond to realities in all countries concerned.

This approach will be supplemented with a Mediterranean strategy that will be completed by the end of the year, while I will continue my bilateral visits that began in Algeria, accompanied by some of you. It is essential. Summits of the Two Shores and the initiatives taken in recent months and years have laid the foundations also for a civil society-focused approach to the agenda that we must take.

Finally, the last point I would like to stress, speaking precisely of this role and work, the goal I have set you of building stability and peace, is of course the Middle East. As time is running short, I will do so with much humility and very partially, as these are subjects that have occupied generations of diplomats. And as I sometimes say, when we look at this subject, we should imagine Sisyphus happy. However, peace in the Mediterranean and peace in Europe will be possible only if we can build new balances in the Middle East. I would like to pay tribute to the role of our diplomacy in this respect, firstly in containing Iranian nuclear proliferation. And the role we have played in recent weeks, and recent days, to build a possible new agreement, has been key, and I congratulate you. It will help encourage the United States of America to consolidate this framework. In particular, we have been active in ensuring the right safeguards and the independence of the IAEA are preserved in this agreement, and that the security interests of all regional actors, including Israel and the Gulf States, are taken into account. I believe that is fundamental.

The coming days and weeks will tell whether we manage to conclude the agreement, but we realize that it will not suffice to build the totality of a stability framework for the region. To do that, we collectively promoted what I believe is an innovation, the Baghdad Conference format, one year ago. That innovation brought to the table, for the first time in a long time, all the region's powers, including Iran and Saudi Arabia, to seek to find avenues for convergence and dialogue. That will be repeated under the auspices of the King of Jordan in a few months. I will attend and I will have the opportunity to receive the King of Jordan to continue this agenda. I think it is a good method that needs to pursue a few simple goals. Consolidating Iraq's sovereignty, and recent days have shown us how crucial that is and the fragility of the country, where we have, I believe, played a growing role in recent years; and fostering the sovereignty and stability of Lebanon, a nation that is so dear to us, so close, but which has, it must be said, its own fragilities and which has been destabilized by multiple crises, through which all the region's destabilizations seep in.

Third objective: to build a security framework in the face of Iran's nuclear, ballistic and regional activity. And this while taking into account the interests of all the States around the table and the State of Israel, since we have always considered Israel's security as a key interest regarding the region's policy.

I truly believe that the dialogue engaged in Baghdad is the framework for this balancing policy in which France is the only non-regional power involved, and in which we are working effectively to try to build critical advances. In this regard and speaking of this context, I cannot fail to say that Syria will not be able to remain a blind spot in this regional issue over the long term. It would take too long for me to address this issue here. France should be proud that the Abraham Accords have helped to move the lines and have especially helped to normalize Israel's relations with several States in the region and Africa. However, I am quite careful when I say that the terms set will not be enough to resolve the Palestinian issue and I remain convinced that if this issue is not resolved politically there will be no lasting peace and stability in the region.

That being said, I have flagged the limits of a particular logic. I have not provided a response. This is not political dexterity but humility and also because I have already spoken in detail about many issues. But we will have to work on this point, within the methodological framework I have just provided, with the objectives that I just assigned and the few open questions that I just raised, which I believe have not been settled through other initiatives.

The third and last objective – and I will conclude with this point of our foreign policy on the heels of a stronger, more influential, more independent France, and this will for a balancing power that builds peace and stability in strategic regions – is to continue building this effective multilateralism that I spoke about and redouble efforts when it comes to certain coalitions we need. As you can see, these are the assignments to ensure continuity regarding some innovative points that I would very quickly like to give you.

First, when it comes to health. I think that the crisis enabled us to see how useful international health cooperation can be and the problems the World Health Organization is dealing with, which some have made worse with their occasional uncooperative attitude and others with their initiatives to bypass them. I think that our role should be to consolidate the World Health Organization as a basis for an effective multilateral institution. We must absolutely consolidate the principles for sharing information, transparency and scientific independence. We must consolidate the early warning agenda for epidemics and we must build on the World Health Organization, and the One Health coalition for which we need to build a cross-cutting approach that covers public health, animal health and global health at local, national and international levels. This is an agenda that was conceived during the crisis and has been extremely structuring for our countries and our cooperation efforts and in which, I think that France has a key role to play because of its expertise and geopolitical opportunities it can provide. Because behind that, there are new partnerships with Africa, the Latin American region and the Indo-Pacific region. Similarly, when it comes to health, I want us to be able to consolidate the ACT-A initiative in two respects: to continue to strengthen primary health systems with our bilateral action. Efforts must be pursued and this is a crucial objective for me. In addition, following through with capacity, building vaccine manufacturing hubs and therefore, diagnostic and treatment hubs with a few key countries that we must consolidate.

The second objective regards the climate. This is an essential combat for all of us. I talked about this earlier. It will be at the core of our country's action with planning led by the Prime Minister at the core of our European action. For the past several years, it has been at the core of our diplomatic action and our diplomatic achievements. But we must step up our efforts in this area too, and develop new initiatives to take. We will only rise to the climate challenge if we are able to galvanize the large emitters first and foremost to make efforts that can tackle the issues. That is the first point. Just take a look at the emissions. We know where efforts are being made: Europe, the United States followed by the major intermediary powers. A fair way to proceed is to convince our major partners among the developed countries within the OECD to make the maximum commitments of emissions per capita. I would like for us to launch this structuring initiative to remobilize and establish a system of constraints.

In line with the same idea of fair distribution of effort, we must ensure that emerging countries engage in a virtuous trajectory, whether they be from Africa, Asia or Latin America. Yes, I said emerging countries. With each of them, we should come to agreements to finance energy transition in our common interest and with less costly terms than in developed countries. We cannot ask emerging countries to go faster and to make a choice basically between development and climate with financing terms that are much tougher than in our country and that would be made even tougher by the rate policy that is currently being implemented.

And so, what we have started to do with a South African laboratory, and the Just Energy Transition, or JET, initiative that was taken, is to build comprehensive finance and energy transition agreements. We need to expand this initiative to several other countries, including Senegal, Indonesia and India, and support them in this work. These solidarity and engagement efforts to help Southern countries must be accompanied by climate adaptation efforts. And let's be honest, climate change is here. There could be increases in temperatures beyond the objectives in the Paris Agreement. In France, we must change our ways of doing things and our infrastructures, but in vulnerable countries, major protection needs to be provided to avoid fresh crises related to the huge numbers of people being displaced because of climate change. And therefore, we must help them double their investments because for them, it is already too late. Finally, financing adaptation and resilience, in France and in Southern countries, means protecting our ecosystems, our health, our food and our water resources. And also, it involves a far-reaching diplomatic movement, which justifies at least 30% of climate finance going to nature-based solutions. This is a way to completely change the approach we have had to discussions with Southern countries since 2015, and which has caused recent negotiations we have conducted in the G20 and other forums to stall. We need to rally support from all those who are able to contribute. In this regard, a One Planet Summit could be devoted to this major issue, with a specific focus on water management.

More generally, we need to synchronize international efforts devoted to the climate and biodiversity effectively, as we have started to do, in various meetings that will serve as a foundation for our action: the COP27 in Egypt this year – which I will attend – the COP15 in Montreal, and the UN Ocean Conference that we will host in 2025 where we will try to build an unprecedented agreement on oceans. In this regard, the fact that in recent years we have redoubled our efforts to safeguard the Paris Agreement, that we instigated the One Planet Summit for Biodiversity to lay down the terms of an agenda in this area and consolidate the objectives and coalitions for land and marine protected areas, and the fact that we adopted for the first time a polar strategy and a clear, visible, serious strategy that was transposed in Europe and promoted on the international agenda, is a sign of this convergence of agendas, which has created strength, but that we must now implement internationally. Because this is extremely productive when it comes to building unprecedented partnerships with all the continents and has helped us have this cooperation approach. For example, regarding tropical forests of the Amazon within the framework of the Alliance founded in 2019, with Africa thanks to the alliances build with Gabon and other countries regarding primary forests, and the One Forest Summit that will focus on this

theme, and all the commitments taken in the area.

I'm moving quickly, but you can see the huge number of initiatives taken, and to what extent there is synergy and symbiosis when they are grouped together. But above all, there is a strength of action and conviction if we can drive these initiatives, and in particular, significant results can be achieved. This is also why we will continue what we began with the Great Green Wall through concrete projects, particularly as regards agriculture, from the Gulf of Guinea to the Horn of Africa, to develop plant proteins, support regional partners and help this diplomacy.

Climate diplomacy will be at the heart of these objectives for effective multilateralism because we will redouble France's efforts, but this only makes sense if nobody can use the famous excuse of what we represent, and therefore if we can implement this at European level. The fundamentals are all there; with regard to the private sector, we have begun to create the terms and we must keep control of them and in some ways, also the terms of reference so as not to have imposed Anglo-Saxon standardization. And on the fight against climate change, biodiversity, the oceans and poles, we know how to build this huge agenda of initiatives and concrete actions which mobilizes and creates new coalitions.

Finally, this component, which also requires breaking new ground, will be a test for effective multilateralism and our work will be built on new spaces which are not yet regulated, or insufficiently so.

The first such space is digital technology. We have done a lot in recent years. Digital diplomacy was built and a specific position was created for an ambassador working on that and on negotiations. Since summer 2017, along with the United Kingdom, we have been at the forefront, seeking to build a coalition, and then the Tech for Good and as I mentioned, Christchurch Call initiatives. We have achieved results, the famous "golden hour" during which terrorist content is withdrawn by platforms. We have changed things at European level, but we have to break new ground. Digital technology must still be regulated. That is why you will be mobilized alongside your colleagues from the Culture and Digital Sovereignty Ministries, for the meeting on free information to be held in the autumn and which will also launch several initiatives which we have taken, such as Reporters Without Borders which I mentioned earlier.

In essence, I will say it in these terms, we must create international public policy for digital technology. Because this public space has indeed been formed, it is globalized. But since it was built by private actors and individual users, it was built with no rules. And the very intense battles we are waging against sexual harassment, to protect our children, to fight violence against women, to defend our values in our country are shaken each time because there is content which says completely the opposite freely circulating on our platforms, affecting our children, our teenagers, our families, not to mention the propaganda from other States using these same channels. We must re-examine the terms of dialogue and terms of reference for new conflicts. And so yes, a European and international regulation must be adopted in this civil but also military space because they should not be confused, and they must be differentiated.

And to mention just two more, space and the high seas are two new international spaces today becoming hugely invaded by powers, with new unusual and non-cooperative behaviours. We have seen this with Russian initiatives at the start of the space conflict, we are seeing it with the many initiatives from sovereign powers and from private stakeholders in the high seas which must be regulated in space and the high seas. And thus which must have an international framework. The failure of BBNJ negotiations over the past few days, despite the commitment from our diplomacy and from several of you here whom I would like to thank, must not cause us to give up. And there too, we must be able to rebuild new coalitions of stakeholders through the events which I have just listed.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have not been thorough but yet I have spoken for a long time. But as you can see, in these times each lucid mind is somehow feeling dizzy. Several times over the past few years, the unthinkable has happened. A global epidemic, the shutdown of all our economies, the return of war to Europe, the nuclear threat, etc. We must be prepared for the unthinkable in the future. And in the face of this, we must have clear, simple objectives, and I believe that is what I have set out. I think I have recalled some constants and some methods on which we must never be intimidated. We must seek to be efficient in all areas, we must recognize that we ourselves must bring a more hybrid approach to our action. We must more closely involve civil society, find partners and allies to support and explain our action, and we must adapt to changing locations, cooperate without being naive and react objectively.

But to do this, I believe we have genuine assets, a comprehensive model for the army, a strong army, the largest in Europe, and the choices we will make, along with strong diplomacy, which here too I believe is the most comprehensive and structured at European level, which produces ideas and results.

We have two components, if I may say, in our genes. France, because it is a nation with a universal perspective. It is a force in the world. With the goal of the fight against obscurantism, we built for ourselves and by ourselves the belief in scientific and human progress, and a universal ambition which places the free and rational

the belief in scientific and human progress, and a universal ambition which places the free and rational individual above all else. These are universal values. Trying to disrupt them will create chaos, disorder and trouble. Having promoted them and continuing to promote them forcefully and defending them in all scenarios is essential, and demonstrates strength. This must be done without giving an impression that we are preaching to others when finding partners, but we must take responsibility for that.

And Europe is a force in the world. In some aspects, as I have said, it is a means, in others an objective. It is a force because it is the best laboratory in the world for managing diversity and complexity. Nowhere in the world has such a concentrated space of cultures, histories, past troubles, languages, and which has been living in peace for so long, in cooperation, without any one dominating the other. When we say that to build today's world, we must find solutions for an effective multilateralism and build balances, we are saying that European technology is a good technology for export. And thus in our genetic makeup we have the know-how to do that.

But to do so, we must also rebuild morally. I raised that point on 13 July before our armies, but it goes for the entire nation. Because the war is returning, we must seek peace and build solutions. But we must be a strong nation, which as I was saying, knows the price of freedom and the possibility of war so as to never engage in war to its full extent, but to defend its interests when it must and in that situation, it must be that nation's choice and be within a framework which it sovereignly and nationally defines. All this is an immense but exciting challenge. And so what I would now like to tell you, as you have understood, you have done a lot, as have we over the past five years, we have decided upon and adopted a future ambition. And in the face of this huge upheaval, we have a huge amount of work ahead of us. I know that we are capable of it, and I believe that together, we will accomplish it. I am counting on you.

Long live the Republic, long live France!