Discours du Président de la République à l'occasion du Sommet sur la souveraineté numérique européenne .

Emmanuel MACRON

Dear Chancellor, dear Friedrich, Commissioner, ministers, entrepreneurs, investors, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you very much, Friedrich, for this opportunity to be here with you and with our entrepreneurs and investors and academics and ministers for such an important event. And let me first apologize, Madam and everybody, for my delay. I'm responsible for that. But I wanted to welcome in France Boualem Sansal, and I want to reiterate my greeting and my big thanks to the German diplomacy and to you, and President Steinmeier, for your incredible help. He's back, thanks to you.

I have to say, and this is a pleasure and not a coincidence, that I do agree totally with what Chancellor Merz expressed right now. And indeed, we are together completely convinced that we have entered a technological race in the digital field, which clearly affects the pillars of our society. And of course, our economy has entered the race for AI, cloud computing, chips, quantum technology, from downstream to upstream. In all these different transformations, the competition is definitely a very fierce and global one.

Talking about digital sovereignty is relevant to our competitiveness and our ability to innovate, but also to the health of our democracies, the efficiency of our public services and the protection of our citizens, particularly our children. And I will revert to that. And this is also taking place in the context of a great confrontation you mentioned, Friedrich, between the U.S. and China. And let's be clear : Europe doesn't want to be the client of the big entrepreneurs or the big solutions being provided either from the U.S. or from China. We clearly want to design our own solutions.

Not to say that we don't want to cooperate. Being more sovereign and more independent doesn't mean you want to be in autarky, no. But it means that on the key pillars, on the key building blocks, you want to preserve your sovereignty. And this is just a refusal of being a vassal. Indeed, there is a short-term cost not to be a vassal, because you have to reinvest, you have sometimes to take very bold decisions to be sure you will not create new dependencies or preserve existing dependencies. But I think it's very important for us.

This transformation presents us with a twofold challenge : innovate to remain competitive while protecting our data, our infrastructure and more broadly our sovereignty. And this is this agenda of innovation and protection — which is not protectionism — which is so important, where probably we prioritised during the past few years the regulation of our domestic players. And this is what we have to change. We have to innovate before regulating, and we have to protect, not be overwhelmed by the non-European competitors. This is the right approach, according to us, in order precisely to deliver this digital agenda.

Germany and France are convinced that this challenge can only be met collectively at European level, in a spirit of unity and shared responsibility. And thank you once again for this summit, this invitation and the opportunity to be together, to have our commissioner and so many ministers and the current presidency. Because if we let the Americans and the Chinese have all the champions, one thing is certain : we may have the best regulations in the world, but we won't be regulating anything.

This is why our willingness is clearly to do everything we can to build European champions on the different key building blocks, key elements of our digital strategy, and to deploy a holistic approach, as you perfectly phrased it.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight some of our achievements first before going to the top priorities of this summit.

First of all, I want to remind all of us that we have very strong assets. And having framed the discussion by insisting on this fierce competition with China and the U.S., I really believe that until now we underestimated what we can do together as Europeans. First, we have a 450-million-consumer market, and this is a huge asset. This domestic market is not to be underestimated. Only the European market can provide both the scale and the core values that can allow our tech companies to thrive and export their products on international markets. This is why the single market agenda is so important.

Second, we are attractive, as was shown at the Summit for Action on AI in February in Paris, clearly illustrated by the commitments and announcements of this summit today in Berlin. And clearly, we have a momentum precisely to attract more and more investments, 12 billion mentioned here. Our two countries are attracting a lot of investment coming from the rest of the world to build more data centers and solutions. And we clearly have a lot of assets : we have talents in Europe, we have this domestic market, we have energy and we can deploy as well critical solutions. So, I want to insist on the fact that we are an attractive place and we have a lot of assets that we can provide.

Third, we have a very strong Franco-German convergence. This summit on European digital sovereignty is a concrete result of the agenda that we set during the Franco-German Council of Ministers co-chaired in Toulon at the end of August this year and which allowed the adoption of 8 roadmaps in the critical sectors necessary to our competitiveness and around 30 flagship initiatives. This summit is a new demonstration of a Franco-German reflex that plays out at all levels, as shown by the number of companies and stakeholders present today.

Fourth, we have also managed to develop remarkable tools at the European level, and this is an asset. In a world where technology is much faster than legislation, these tools do not yet allow us to ensure the ambition of European digital sovereignty. But in the current geopolitical context, preserving our digital acquis is of utmost importance. With GDPR in 2018 and more recently with the DSA and DMA framework, and the upcoming Cybersecurity Act, the EU is endowed with several key legislations respecting a fair balance between ensuring ethics, consumer protection, safeguarding democracy, while also favouring innovation and competitiveness.

Now, what we want to do is clarification of some remaining issues. This is part of the outcome of this summit and of a simplification agenda. But I want to insist on that even in front of entrepreneurs, because this set of very important regulations is an asset. In a democracy like the U.S., it is not sustainable to have tech companies without any regulation. It's impossible, because you cannot dedicate the strength of your economy to the Seven Magnificent. And more than that, you cannot delegate the whole functioning of your democracy to the Seven Magnificent. It's unbearable.

We do believe in innovation, we do believe in sovereignty, we do believe in these digital innovations, but in our societies with our values, and in the fact that we all live in democracies — and this is a chance — and we are neither dictatorships, autocracies nor a democracy with a strange collective choice which is indeed to renounce any capacity to regulate. Because we know the result of that : some monopolies, the dysfunction of the market, and at the end of the day the killing of potential innovation and, more than that, the dysfunction of democracies.

The fifth point on our European assets is that we have tech leaders, from startups to well-established companies, that are ready to make this message their own. By bringing together a wide range of private, Franco-German and European initiatives, this summit has shown that we are aligned with the digital sector. I want to cite here the landmark partnerships between Mistral and SAP in AI, the partnerships between Pasqal, the CEA and the German Jülich Supercomputing Centre in quantum, the partnership between Owkin, Institut Gustave-Roussy and la Charité Berlin on AI and health, as well as all the announcements made by the EU AI Champions Initiatives. This is the best evidence of the fact that we do have a lot of champions, a lot of energy in this room and a lot of common projects.

These five points are here to say that we have everything if we want to deliver the agenda of more sovereignty in the digital field, and if we want to be much more sovereign on AI, quantum, chips and so on.

Now let me just flag some of the critical outcomes of this summit I wanted to underline, completely in continuity with the words of the Chancellor. With all these efforts, we have created the conditions for a European model for tech which puts our values and our economic principles at the forefront. Creating this framework was necessary but not sufficient. We have to move to execution and take action to unleash the full potential of the European tech ecosystem.

For this reason, we put digital sovereignty, fostering domestic champions and freeing ourselves from dependence on foreign technologies at the forefront of the economic agenda that we set during the Franco-German Council of Ministers. And this summit is the time to implement this agenda and to achieve true European sovereignty, which means freeing ourselves from technological dependencies at every level of the value chain, from critical infrastructures and hardware to data, cloud and software.

And we will move forward with three priorities that we believe are key to strengthening European tech companies and fostering the emergence of new leaders.

First, simplification. I cannot agree more with the words of the Chancellor. We work very hard together, engaging with our Members of Parliament and the Commission to deliver a big simplification agenda at the European scale. This is a necessity, because sometimes we put tariffs to ourselves in a certain way and we have to lift them.

I have said it : Europe has implemented pioneering legislation to ensure that the digital transformation wouldn't hinder the democratic principles and consumer protection that stand at the heart of the European model. This is good. But what we have now realised is that over-regulation as well has a cost. The Draghi report estimates that reducing administrative burdens could unlock 200 billion euros.

So, because streamlined and coherent regulatory framework enhances clarity, supports startup development and strengthens European competitiveness, we need concrete measures towards simplification. Our approach is to prevent legal uncertainty and to adapt existing legislation to fit our standards for consumer and data protection, while preventing value regulatory burden. And it's feasible and it is part of the outcome of this summit.

On the GDPR, thanks to the Franco-German agreement, now we will push together and we are asking the Commission to simplify by improving the calibration of regulatory obligations with a risk-based approach, much more proportionate, much more adapted. This is what a lot of companies are requesting from GDPR.

We want to preserve this regulation. It's very important for a series of topics and our values. But we need this adaptation. On the AI Act, we ask for a 12 month postponement of compliance for high risk AI systems. Necessity, as well, to use this time in order to accelerate our innovation agenda. The priorities defined today, and the measures that we are taking are part of a wider agenda, as I mentioned, to simplify digital regulation as well as CSRD and the CSDDD to allow all European companies to scale up. And part of this simplification agenda is the deepening of the single market. The most important simplification agenda for all of you is to create a real digital single market. And it is not yet the case. Your domestic market is still the German or the French market. And you have to face additional regulations or the regulators when you cross the border.

The top necessity, the core of our agenda together with Chancellor Merz, is clearly to streamline regulation in some critical sectors and digital as part of them, in order to simplify, merge some administrative bodies and deliver concrete and in real terms a single digital market. As Friedrich Merz mentioned, we need in parallel to create an actual savings and investment union. This is a necessity to accelerate on this agenda. Why ? Because in order to deliver a sovereign agenda on the digital side. It's true as well for energy and other sectors, we need more innovation and we have to finance this innovation. Obviously, we will push together to have more common financing from the EU. We have our own programs and we try to work together, but we have to mobilize much more private money. The paradox is that our continent is number one in terms of savings, but one of the worst places to use these savings on innovation and equity, which is crazy. This is a result of our over regulation on banks and insurance. But as well as, the fact that we don't have a proper capital market union. This is why we want to accelerate the securitization agenda beginning of 26, in order to deliver this agenda, to take part of the savings in the banks and insurance, to go to innovation and to invest on equity. And in parallel to accelerate the implementation of the capital market union, to have a proper integrated place and channel much more of the savings on innovation.

Second, after simplification, innovation, precisely. This is the second common priority. Europe can capitalize on a world class university system, on a wide pool of talent and of ideas, but also on the quality of existing infrastructure, including a rapidly increasing computing power capacity and the experience of established industrial groups that are partnering with emerging players to develop vertical tech solutions. On this issue, I just wanted to insist on the fact that we have to follow up our cooperations on our programs on both sides, in order to educate and train more and more talents. And in parallel to build more and more computing capacities. What we need to deliver and to succeed, especially on AI, is talents and computing capacities. On this issue, state governments and the EU have a role to play, to ensure that new actors have access to appropriate infrastructure, including computing power and frontier research centers and today, with a JUWELS supercomputing facility in Germany and Adastra in France. Tomorrow, thanks to the AI Factory and AI gigafactories initiatives at the European level, as well as to the IPCEI AI that we initiated with Germany and several other member states, we have the beginning of such cooperation. Now let's accelerate and let's deliver this capacity. It is absolutely critical.

Third point and part of the achievement of this summit, protection. To limit the risk of extraterritorial enforcement of foreign laws, to limit our dependency, we have to act and to take bold decisions. Otherwise, we will speak about sovereignty, but we will be super dependent on external on foreign solutions or decisions. This is why we have a first issue in terms of sovereignty data. We need to strengthen the protection of European data with the revision of the Cyber Security act as well as in the design of the EU Cloud Certification scheme. We have to create the capacity to store the data on our continent but we have to preserve this data and the use of this data from extraterritorial laws. Otherwise, we are not sovereign anymore. We also need to protect our market. Dominant players today, often non-European, as we mentioned together, are abusing their market power and preventing new challengers from being successful and innovating. This is a reality. Our goal is to restore fair digital markets, where competition can fully play its role to the benefit of innovation and competitiveness.

To that end, the DMA adopted in 2022 during the French Presidency, should be leveraged. And we welcome together the recent announcement of the Commission to consider launching a market investigation into the qualitative designation of cloud hyperscalers. I think this is very important move forward in the implementation of DMA. We need a fair market where the top leaders are not the ones to kill the competition. Otherwise, there is no chance to have innovation and fair competition. More generally, we are already seeing the positive impacts of regulations such as DMA and DSA which strongly incentivize all digital actors to respect both our economic roots and core European values. However, our procedures must be quicker while preserving a high level of quality in the inquiries. But we have clearly to accelerate the implementation of these regulations. To go further, I strongly believe that European preference needs to become our guiding principle, starting with public procurement. If we believe in digital sovereignty, if we want to help our champion to succeed, our top priority as governments, but as well as large European companies, is to have a European preference agenda.

Because guess what ? The Chinese have a Chinese exclusivity as soon as they can and the Americans have a very strong American preference. Sometimes in the regulations, but most of the time the practice. We are the only place where there is never a European preference not to say a fascination for non-European solutions sometimes. This is why the collaborative work that France and Germany are launching to define the notion of European digital services will be key to the concrete implementation of European preference. We launched a working group together to say : what does it mean having a European digital service ? We will fix it rapidly, work with the Commission and our colleagues, but this is a necessity. We have to put it in our regulation to create this preference. And I mentioned this partnership between SAP and Mistral. The letter of intent that our two governments signed today with SAP and Mistral is for me a game changer. It will be the preference for an existing European solution which will be used for public administration in our two countries. This is a game changer for me, the whole model of what we need. I do encourage all the large companies, all the local authorities and the governments present in this room just to look at the competitive map each time you want to take a digital solution, either a competitive and high-quality European solution. If it exists, take it, please take it, adopt it !

This is your unique chance to be sure that you will secure your provider with European regulation, that you will prevent yourself from some extra territorial laws or decisions today or tomorrow. And it will be the best way to help this ecosystem to be competitive. In this context, this is why we have to accelerate our adoption agenda and I want to conclude with this point. Adoption now is critical. We were probably incomplete with Mr. Chancellor. We didn't speak sufficiently about all the infrastructures, our chip agenda and so on. You mentioned that today and we will revert in the months to come on this issue. Now one of the critical races where we have to accelerate is that for all the critical players in the different fields of the industry, we have to accelerate the agenda of adoption for AI. It's true for public administration, but it's super important as well for the different sectors of our industry. Why ? Because it will be the best way to provide activities and clients to the AI Quantum companies. Second, because it will improve productivity and competitiveness of these key players. And third, it will secure the use of cheap use on our soil. But adoption is a new race and we will have it in the weeks, the 26th of this month in Paris, the adopt AI summit, as a follow up, of this one. But it's very important to take very seriously this agenda as well.

My very last remark will be to protect citizens in this digital space. I wanted to flag that in this context of European digital sovereignty, because it's part of it, even if I don't want to elaborate today. If we speak about sovereignty, we should not underestimate our democratic and I would say our cognitive sovereignty. But if you look at our situation today, you give the responsibility of your teenagers who spend on average 4 to 5 hours per day on the social networks. You give the responsibility of the content they are exposed to to U.S. private providers or big Chinese companies. And they design the content, they are in charge of the algorithm, they are in charge of the content with DSA and our regulation, but still being implemented. So when we speak about cyberbullying, when we speak about being exposed to pornography, when we speak about having some mental disease, etc.

I mean, let's be clear, this is exactly made by these platforms to your children. We decided de facto to give them this exclusivity. So this is why, if we want to speak about sovereignty, we have to protect much more our children vis a vis all these contents and all these platforms. The agenda of children and teenagers protection is a necessity for their mental health, for the sustainability of our education system. Second, if we want to protect our democracies and preserve the well functioning of our democracies, let's regulate as well the content of this platforms. Let's be much more demanding because please don't believe, once again, on the so called "free speech agenda" for me, we don't speak about free speech when the algorithm is hidden and in the hands of very few players, and when they don't implement the laws decided by the citizens of a country.

This is the Wild West, notF free speech. So let's be clear, if we want digital sovereignty, we will have to better protect our children, our teenagers and our democratic space. I will stop here. I want to thank all of you. I want to thank you, Mr. Chancellor and ministers, for this unique opportunity. As you can see, we have a lot of assets to succeed as Europeans and to cooperate with others, but cooperating as a prerequisite, not being dependent. We can deliver this agenda of being much more innovative, protecting the key building blocks and being more sovereign. This is exactly what we want to do and I want you to be sure that there is a very strong alignment and partnership between Germany and France on this agenda. Our willingness in the months to come is as well to structure a core team in order to implement in the months and years to come a clear common digital approach between Germany and France. When we speak about AI, when we speak about quantum, when we speak about all the key issues we mentioned today, we need to build the common integrated market and approach it together. We strongly believe in this common approach and we strongly believe in the European perspective and the close cooperation at 27 and with the European Commission.
Thank you for your attention.