

28 November 2017 - [Seul le prononcé fait foi](#)

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Emmanuel Macron's speech at the University of Ouagadougou

Mr. President,
Ministers,
Mr. President of Ouaga I University,
Parliament members,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I would first like to express my deepest gratitude to President Kaboré, to the President of the university and to all of you for welcoming me to your country, to your region and here to this place today. Your presence and your faces give me a full vision of the promises for the future that is being built here. Thank you, Mr. President, for the hospitality you have shown us starting last night in your country, for this day that we will spend together and for allowing me to speak to all of you in this setting.

I am also grateful to each of you for having taken some time off from the most valuable task in the world: building the "future that you dare to invent" in the eloquent words of one of your compatriots. "This future that you dare to invent", words you surely recognize as those of Thomas Sankara, to whom I would like to pay officially tribute today.

I was told that this auditorium was Marxist and pan-African. I therefore said to myself: "This may be the place where I have to go to speak!"

Because I did not come here to tell you that we were going to make a great speech to start a new chapter in France and Africa's relationship. Nor did I come to tell you what France's policy for Africa should be, as some people may claim. Because there no longer is a French policy for Africa! There is a policy we may conduct, there are friends, there are people with whom we agree and others no. But above all, there is a continent that we need to look in the face.

Yet, it is never easy – given our shared history – for a French president to come and speak about Africa this way, and I would never pretend to express the complexity and diversity of a continent made up of 54 countries. First because it would be terribly arrogant to attempt to explain that there is absolute unity and complete uniformity; 54 countries, each with its own history, with even more ethnicities and languages, with relationships that are not the same with regard to France and a past very often full of very different traumas.

I do not want to act here as a historian in the university that has taken the name of one of Africa's greatest historians. I want to speak here in this country of upstanding men and women because I know that we are not just talking to Burkina Faso, nor just to West Africa or even just to French-speaking Africa; because such barriers that long shaped our perceptions, our political considerations, and our analyses are no longer the barriers of today's Africa, your Africa.

These barriers between a French-speaking Africa and an English-speaking Africa, between a North Africa and a sub-Saharan Africa, between a French-speaking Africa and a Portuguese-speaking Africa; all these barriers are artificial, they merely, to a certain extent, impose upon us a past that we must move on from, perceptions that were, and constructions that must evolve.

Speaking before you, I would therefore call Africa a plural, multiple and strong continent and a continent where part of our shared future will play out. I would speak to you sincerely, with our deep friendship in mind.

Like you, I am from a generation that has never known a colonized Africa. I am from a generation for which one of the most wonderful political memories is Nelson Mandela's struggle and victory over apartheid, chased out by a pan-African solidarity spanning from Algiers to Rabat, from Luanda to Conakry. That is the history of our generation.

Therefore I refuse to always refer back to the same perceptions of the past. There has been fighting, there have been errors and crimes, there have been great things and happy stories. But I am deeply convinced that our duty is not to make matters worse, our duty is not to stay in this past but to wholeheartedly live this generation's adventure.

I am from a generation of French people for whom the crimes of European colonization cannot be disputed and are part of our history. I identify with Albert Londres and André Gide, who denounced thousands of deaths caused by the Congo Railway and I will not forget that at that time they voiced minority views in France and in Europe.

I am also from a generation that has been struck by the determination of Burkina Faso's young people in defending, on two occasions, democracy and the rule of law, which at times has cost them their lives. I am from a generation that does not come and tell Africa what to do or what the rule of law entails, but rather one that encourages young African women and men who want to shoulder their responsibilities, who want to do what they can to see the winds of freedom and empowerment blow as you have done here.

And I am from a generation who has seen that, throughout Africa, African young people are clamouring to help build the future of their country and globalization. I am from a generation of French people who does not consider Africa to be a burdensome past or just like any other neighbour. France has maintained long, unwavering historical ties with Africa, full of suffering and heartbreak, but also so often of brotherhood and mutual assistance.

Africa is carved into France's collective memory, in its culture, in its history, in its identity. This is a strength and a source of pride that I would like to cultivate, that I would like to champion as a French asset, for France and for Africa, in our relationship with the world.

I think there has been a technical problem. I would like to make sure that it is nothing more than that. Is everything OK? If anyone was harmed by sparks, please say something instead of bravely bearing it. (sound cut off)

We are a generation whose destinies are interwoven – whether we like it or not – since we have this shared history because our parents, our brothers and sometimes our children made the choice to cross continents and oceans. And like you, I am from a generation convinced that African diasporas in France are also key to our opening up to the world. And I am also convinced – as are many of you in this room – that we cannot simply consider ourselves to be thousands and thousands of miles away from each other, but also often interwoven through our blood, history and destinies.

I often hear people say that Africa's strength is in its youth. When I look at the numbers, whether for Burkina Faso or the entire region, it is difficult to say otherwise. But may I say that France's strength, especially in Europe today, is also in its youth. And part of this youth is a product of our shared history. France's youth, in part, also looks to Africa. They listen to us when we speak about Africa because we are speaking to them about themselves. France's youth are also in part Senegalese, Ivorian, Guinean, Burkinabé, Nigerien, Malian. They are also all of those things. And so when I talk to you about you, I also talk to you about me.

Lastly, I am from a generation that is deeply European. From a generation that is highly attached to their country but also to what can be built with other countries. I am deeply convinced that it is not simply French-African dialogue that we must rebuild together, but a project between our two continents, a truly new relationship, redesigned at the appropriate scale where the European Union could speak and build with the African Union and with Africa as a whole. It is on this scale that things should happen.

It is for all of those reasons that I am standing here before you today, here in Burkina Faso, and in this particular place. A place where we must be honest, a place that sums up the two faces of Africa: that of its amazing opportunities and that of its hardships, challenges, and daily struggles that each of you face with courage to forge your own futures. I will not stand by those who see Africa as a continent of crises and poverty, nor will I stand by those who tout an enchanted Africa, an Africa suddenly attributed with every virtue under the sun and made into a model.

I will not be one of those who turn a blind eye and ignore the difficulties of your daily lives. One of those who ignore strikes, lost years, problems acquiring textbooks or scholarships, and at times just living a simple and happy life. I am of those who have a realistic view. Those who do not consider Africa to be a lost continent or a saved continent. Quite simply, I consider Africa to be the world's central, global and key continent because it is where all of today's challenges intersect.

Africa is where the world will be transformed. If we fail to meet these challenges together, Africa will sink into obscurity. This could happen. It will regress, it will decline. But along with it, Europe will have the same hardships because it will enter into a long period of migration, poverty, and routes of necessity and of even greater pain than today.

However if we manage to join forces to meet these challenges, if we are able to rise up and successfully face this great time of change we are living, then this is where a portion of global growth will be generated. This is

this great time of change we are living, then this is where a portion of global growth will be generated. This is where there will be a successful and conquering youth because there is everything to be conquered. This will thus be an era of development, growth and new opportunities for both Africans and all of those who wish to embark upon this adventure alongside them.

This great time of change is when in Africa, we do need to meet all the challenges. Terrorism, which has already struck your capital twice, and that every day, insidiously, upsets the balances and stability of our country. Climate change, which is ravaging the Sahel more than any other region in the world, which in Lake Chad – and in the whole Sahel-Sahara strip – is upsetting entire populations, plunging into the most dire poverty women and men who live off farming, the sale of fish or trade routes that have been operating for centuries and centuries.

The population, with 450 million young people to join the workforce in Africa by 2050; urbanization, since Africa will, in a few years' time, become a continent of megacities; and finally, democracy, a struggle that you have fought and won here, but one a large portion of African youth still faces. Above all, you are experiencing what no other continent or generation has experienced before: the culmination of all of these challenges at the same time.

Your generation has a huge responsibility: the duty to meet these challenges altogether as swiftly as possible. You cannot simply beat climate change and forget about the other challenges. You cannot simply win the fight against terrorism if at the same time, you do not win the fight for economic development and stability. (Sound cut out)many others have failed, where many others have said: "This fight is not our fight. We can do without it", where many others have become complacent.

If I have come to speak to you today, it is because much depends on you. I owe you some commitments. Your leaders also owe you a great deal but part of the solution depends on you. On your willingness to take this path, on your strength of character and your determination to succeed in this time of transformation, and on our ability to join forces to meet these challenges. The solution will not come from outside, nor will it come from the status quo or old ways of doing things.

I want to stand at your side. I want to be the person who helps Europe seize this opportunity: the opportunity to listen to Africa's youth, to make the best of it and put its potential to serve the world as a whole. And that starts by coming before you, to listen to you, to all your voices. I will listen to young people wherever they are, and wherever they express themselves. This afternoon, together in a school. Tomorrow, in Côte d'Ivoire. And the next day, in Ghana, on football pitches. I will go everywhere to listen to what is expressed, what is said, what is wanted. But others will also help me hear your message, and I was keen for them to be here with me today.

They are the members of the Presidential Council for Africa. "For Africa", because they will be a permanent link with you, as are the organizations – I have not forgotten them – which work alongside local people on the ground every day. And "Presidential", because your voice will be passed on to me, with no filter, intermediary or concession. That is what they started to do a few days ago, when we prepared this visit together.

They are young men and women who have agreed to give their own time to come and be, so to speak, your spokespeople, to meet you, to listen, and to share their experience. They are not here to tell me what I should be told, or what has already long been said to Presidents of the Republic. No! They are here to tell me what is said, felt and wanted, what is expected, what is necessary. That is what they will continue to do by ensuring respect for the commitments made before you.

Because I came to make commitments and I have already made some. I have committed to France being there to address the development challenge. Much of what I have just underlined and what I will discuss in greater detail in a minute would not be possible if France were not equal to this challenge, and did not decide to be equal to it in terms of official development assistance. I know that it is much expected. I made the commitment, right at the beginning of my term, to achieve 0.55% of gross national income being dedicated to official development assistance. That is a firm and demanding commitment.

It is demanding, and will require efforts. We will make those efforts. Because those efforts are France's contribution to the success of a whole continent, of many countries; and because it is also part of our success. And so, in the coming months, a strategy will be drawn up and prepared by the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, very precisely explaining how we will achieve that goal with funded objectives and available finance, year after year.

But we should not talk merely of figures. We sometimes know what official development assistance means, and what it may have meant in the past. Money of which little reaches the field, too little of which reaches young people or those who need it most. And so this philosophy was changed in France a few years ago, under the authority of Jean-Michel Severino, whom I am pleased to see here, and it is now promoted at the top of the Agence Française de Développement (AFD, French Development Agency) by Rémy Rioux, who is also here with

me. That is the transformation we have carried out over the last few years, bringing about a French development policy more deeply rooted in the realities of the field, more delocalized and in touch with needs.

We need to move on to a new phase, make a new step forward. In the coming months, I want us to think, perhaps with you, of a new name, a new philosophy, new means of action, as we did together a few weeks ago in the Sahel with the Alliance for the Sahel. That means having a more specific form of official development assistance, in which we all meet around the table, directly, with students, NGOs, associations and businesses, and where France, along with its African partners, puts itself in a position to aggregate multilateral assistance – that of other European powers – in order to enhance efficiency.

Not to build cathedrals in our own honour, no. To pursue projects the Africans need. The Alliance for the Sahel launched in July involves Germany, the European Union, the African Development Bank, the World Bank and the UNDP, along with all members of the G5 Sahel. And it fosters more effective and methodical intervention on the ground.

This is the change of method that I will propose to everyone at the Africa-EU Summit tomorrow. This is the change of method that we have begun, and which absolutely must continue. We need to be more efficient, closer to needs on the ground, sometimes doing away with intermediaries in our organization and having a stronger collective culture of evaluation.

Sometimes, our official development assistance does not correspond to needs. French and African governments like it. That is a bad method. It has to be evaluated. If it is effective, it should continue. If it is not, then it should be redirected towards locally promoted projects and projects we will support. That is the new philosophy, the new desire, that will accompany France's firm financial commitment.

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear friends. Words are important for they are the beginning of a shared choice, a shared history, a shared imagination. That is why the proposal I bring before you is not to decree, alone, a new phase in our relationship. It is to propose, humbly, to invent a friendship together. We have what we need to do that. We have history, ties, family adventures and common passions, and everything that comes with them. Dilemmas, great desires to do things and, above all, a friendship to act. For the aim is, together, to influence the great balances of tomorrow's world.

That is what I have come here to do, with you. To propose inventing a friendship to act. And the cement of a friendship is to begin by telling everything to one another. It is not to ignore any of the dangers that could irreversibly sweep away Africa's stability, and also Europe's stability. It is determining responsibilities, and each shouldering one's part.

The first danger that weighs on all our consciences is breaches of our human dignity. It is the responsibility to say that the tragedies in front of our eyes in Libya are a crime against humanity.

They are the final phase of the tragedy we have allowed to thrive on what I call the "routes of necessity". These routes of the Sahel, Libya, the Mediterranean, are final, for they bring us to the worst disaster in our common history: that of slavery and human trafficking. This is a complex history, over millennia. Part of Africa's history with itself and with Europe. But it is a crime against humanity going on today in front of our eyes. It must be named, not to accuse others, as I sometimes hear. Not to say: "the problem is elsewhere." No, to act, with force and vigour!

Tomorrow, during the Africa-EU Summit, alongside President Ouattara and President Condé, I will propose a Euro-African initiative to bring an end to this strategy employed by all those who want our destruction, this strategy of terrorists and traffickers in arms and human beings, who bring about the tragedy we see before us. This initiative needs to begin by hitting criminal organizations and networks of people smugglers who act in impunity from the urban centres of the Horn of Africa and West Africa right through to European coasts.

In this respect, I commend the courageous actions the Nigerien authorities have already taken. I will also propose that Africa and Europe come to the aid of populations trapped in Libya, providing massive support for evacuation of persons in danger. That is a duty – our duty. Firstly, as announced in Paris on 28 August, by acting as European countries and the European Union in close liaison with the African Union, whose commitment I would like to commend. In Niger and Chad, this involves sending missions from the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA) and all European equivalents to work closely with the UNHCR to identify men and women eligible for protection under the right of asylum. We must, starting there, protect them and bring them to Europe.

We have begun sending our first missions and I am committed to France, with Europe at its side, being equal to this challenge. But at the same time, we also need to encourage the work of the International Organization for Migration with all African countries of origin and support returns to home countries. We cannot let hundreds of

thousands of Africans who have no chance of obtaining asylum, some of whom may spend years in Libya, face all the dangers of the Mediterranean and run into this tragedy. It is therefore essential to work for their return and, in this respect, to assist the International Organization for Migration.

France has begun doing this work, in close liaison with the authorities of Chad and Niger. I would like to thank Presidents Déby and Issoufou. But in the face of the scale of the tragedy before our eyes, we need to scale up our efforts. As Libya continues to seek the path to its stabilization, we cannot leave its authorities to face this challenge alone. That is the opportunity and historic duty to give tangible meaning to the partnership between Europe and Africa. France will be there. I hope all Europe will be too.

The second imperative is combating terrorism. I say that because we share this tragic destiny. Both our countries have been shaken and struck by terrorism in recent years.

Both have been struck and wounded by Islamist terrorism that has built up in Syria and Iraq, which has also built up in the Sahel-Sahara region.

France has stood beside you, and I would like to commend here the courageous decision of my predecessor, François Hollande, in deciding extremely quickly to intervene in Mali to curtail the advance of the terrorists.

That was the right decision and the French armed forces are one of the few in Europe capable of acting in such little time. We did so because France has always stood beside Africa when its stability and life have been in danger, just as Africa has always stood alongside France when that applied to us. That is our history.

But today we continue to be present. Above and beyond the MINUSMA presence, it is the Barkhane force in the Sahel-Sahara region that is ensuring stability, in which thousands of French citizens, whom I would like to commend and thank, risk their lives every day to combat terrorism, protect your children, help you, and win this battle against terrorism! Here today with you, I would like to thank them for their courage and think of their family and casualties.

But as you know, the ambition of the young French soldiers in Operation Barkhane is to allow their brothers-in-arms from Burkina Faso, Niger, Mauritania and Chad to return to their posts and protect their people. That is what they want, and what I want.

That is why, together, we launched the G5 Sahel Joint Force. The goal of these forces is to coordinate the armed forces of the G5 countries, to operate on the ground in the most difficult border areas, and to address the challenge, just as you are seeking to do here in Burkina Faso.

We need to speed up this work that began in July. France has contributed financial and military support and our cooperation is exemplary. We have also trained and organized a Staff that is now integrated.

The first experiences have been successful. Now I want us to bring about the first victories of the G5 Sahel forces. It is essential, in the coming weeks and months, for these Joint Forces to knock out these terrorists, particularly in your area, and to achieve their first victories. These victories are essential for your armed forces, your population, and for our common struggle against terrorism.

This is a burden we share, and tomorrow it is stronger and more responsive regional organizations that will pick it up. I know that this is also the deeply held wish of the President of the African Union, Alpha Condé, to whom I would like to pay tribute here, who has spared no effort in addressing all African conflicts to make Africa more present in settling them.

But for the African Union to truly be more present and even more credible, these credible regional forces, designed and organized like those we are building for the G5 Sahel, are essential. And so I would also like to commend Rwanda, Senegal and other African countries for their commitment to speeding up this development.

That is the direction of history. And it is also why I will be supporting the African Union's initiative at the UN Security Council, aimed at ensuring autonomous and predictable funding for African military operations.

France will, of course, continue its training activities aimed at building sub-regional capacities, in order to support this work.

The third threat which could undermine Africa is political conflict. Optimists will say that Africa has never had so few conflicts between States. Those who are more realistic – myself included – will observe that Africa has never seen so many internal conflicts, so many standoffs, so many stalemates over constitutions or elections.

You have already heard what I have to say about this and I do not wish to lecture you. The role of the French President is not to explain to African countries how to draft a constitution. how to organize elections or free

...responsible not to explain to African countries how to share a constitution, how to organize elections or how opposition.

Just as I would not expect an African President to do the same in Europe. The President's role should be to stand by those who work on a daily basis to make democracy and the rule of law irreversible. I am talking about those who work for education, human rights, justice and the freedom of the press. I am talking about States and governments who do this and I commend the work of President Kaboré, I am talking about NGOs, journalists, academics and all those who contribute to the democratic pluralism which is so essential for Africa.

By coming here to Burkina Faso, I am sure of only one thing, that change, generational renewal, on a continent where 70% of the population is less than 30 years old, is not an option, but a mathematical certainty. And those who think that today, in Africa, we can have the same politics as we have had in some cases for decades and decades, those who want to delay the course of history, have definitely not looked at Burkina Faso. They have also not understood that this change has an underlying effervescence, their own youth, African youth, which is starting a new chapter.

So I would set them the same task as the one I have set for myself, the task of preparing the future, giving young people their role, investing in them. I will stand alongside those who choose responsibility over denial. In every country where I find such partners, I will work with them unhesitatingly. And this is the case here, my dear Roch. And wherever this is not the case, France will not forgo direct ties with young people, universities, NGOs and entrepreneurs to build a future with them.

The fourth threat is obscurantism, the stranglehold of religious extremism on minds, and this too is not an issue I am naive about. It is a threat which is sometimes far more menacing than terrorism due to its large-scale, widespread, daily presence, its intrusion into schools, homes, campuses and political life. This threat knows no borders, no continents, simply because it attacks the most intimate aspects of life, faith and religion, it distorts their meaning, to transform transcendence into negation of the other.

On this, I am in no position to preach, as I am president of a country which is also facing such a challenge within its own borders, in a secular country, where there is complete separation between religion and State. Today, however, I would like to appeal to your consciences, you can be atheist or secular and proud, you can believe in Islam or Catholicism, animism or anything else, you can be a Muslim or an Evangelist, but never let the religion you believe in do what it was never designed for, do not let your religion convince you that its path is to destroy others.

Never let other people believe that, in the name of a religion, they can dominate or even destroy those who do not believe or do not hold the same beliefs, never let them, in the name of your religion, enslave consciences or individuals. All religions are built on a message of love and hope, they have their differences, they have sometimes fought each other, but we have a duty to build free States, separated from religious considerations and to ensure the free and mature exercise of conscience. Each conscience has a duty, a share of responsibility, never to let religion distort its primary function. I am telling you this because, here again, you have immense responsibility.

Time has come to block religious extremism, leave no space by fighting it on all fronts, in schools, in universities, in all forms of citizenship, fighting it in daily life, fighting it in political speeches and in action. I would like to take the opportunity to pay tribute to the King of Morocco for the outstanding role he plays, and for the words which he was able to find to raise people's awareness of this issue, in view of his distinguished role.

Our priority must be to take this fight further, we must eradicate financing of extremism and distorted paths of religion. I have communicated this message to numerous States, that have been known to fund foundations, schools and supposedly free movements with sometimes dire consequences. Saudi Arabia has joined the fight, and I would like to thank the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia for his very clear statement on this subject when I met with him several weeks ago.

I support his determination to close all foundations that, for several decades, have maintained extremism in Africa and Europe. This is a courageous move which I fully support and which we are monitoring closely. I also count on Qatar, Turkey and Iran to firmly take up this fight. This will be the key to our joint fight in the coming months. We must no longer accept that within our countries, some networks directly or indirectly fund foundations and organizations which foster obscurantism or extremism.

This will be the key issue on the table for the conference on the fight against the financing of terrorism which I will be organizing in Paris next year. But we cannot simply close schools which teach separation and regression. We must also open others which forge the shared base of knowledge, which bring us together, we must build schools which free minds instead of confining them. This is why education will be the absolute priority for the new partnership that I am proposing.

This is what I have committed to, alongside President Macky Sall, by co-sponsoring the replenishment of the Global Partnership for Education. For this reason I will be visiting Dakar in February, with two priorities. Firstly, I want France to take large-scale action to helping train teachers. My Minister of National Education, who will accompany me on this visit, is particularly committed to this fight and we will make concrete commitments. However, it is essential that France helps all willing African States to succeed in this battle against obscurantism, to train teachers and build the strategy which will help to train minds across the continent.

Secondly, I will stand alongside all African Heads of State and Government who choose to introduce compulsory education for girls. I will defend their choice, and I will ask the Agence Française de Développement to prioritize their support for programmes aimed at educating girls. I will set a target for our embassies to give priority to young women for educational bursaries in France. Don't worry, I did not say that grants will be exclusively for young women, I saw men's reaction of protest!

I want to be just as open with you: I watch on with concern as more and more girls drop out of school, sometimes in certain districts of my own country, and I can see it in certain African countries. If Africa wishes to succeed, and France with it, in this global change, we must train and educate everyone, we must educate girls, we must have girls and women who are free – free to choose.

And I tell you, the young men present here today, this is a good thing for you, the society that you are preparing, the society that we are going to build must not be like the society of the past and, far too often, the society of today. It should not be a society where men say what is right for women, where men choose their destiny and say education is good for me, but not really for her. This is no longer acceptable.

There is no more powerful a vehicle for societal progress than the empowerment of girls. The Suns of Independence, which Ahmadou Kourouma allowed to shine, is driven by an African heroine, who incarnates all the hopes of a continent. It is a matter of pride for me that France will help the Suns of this new generation of African women to shine.

This leads me to the fifth challenge, which we cannot shy away from: demography. Not talking about it would be irresponsible. If we say: tout va bien, Madame la Marquise, all is well, nothing to see here, let's continue together as we have always done, we are going to notice that there is an extremely buoyant demography, but in many countries that already lack the growth to allow a generation to live, this demography is going to make things worse. That would be to ignore a concern that must be shared between us.

Africa is 70% young people, and yes, you are fortunate. I have said it and I believe it, if I did not believe it, I would not be here. But, above all, it is an immense responsibility. Demography cannot be decreed, it cannot be dictated, no president will say: my demography should be like this or like that and even less so will a French president decide such a thing for Africa, but it comes down to personal, intimate choices, that no-one should meddle with. And that is the crux of the issue.

It must be a choice, particularly for women and girls. So ask yourselves the question: when you have 7, 8, 9 children per woman, are you absolutely sure that in every case, in every family, this was the woman's choice? In my country there are families who have made that choice, in France there are families who have 7, 8, 9 children per woman, that is their choice and that is great, I am not here to judge, in fact, I never talk about it. And it is not for me to judge African families and African women, but I want to be sure that, across Africa, it is the choice of each particular woman.

I want young women to be able, if they wish, to continue studying, continue training, find a job, found a company, make that choice. Them and no-one else. I want every girl, across Africa, to be able to choose not to get married and start having children aged 13 or 14, not because a French president wanted it to be so, because you wanted it to be so. But we must have a responsible, strong debate, a debate about freedom of choice, a debate which goes hand in hand with democracy, that goes with the path that you have chosen.

This is a deep-held conviction which has driven me to make gender equality the key issue of my term, firstly in France, where we still have huge steps to take to ensure genuine equality in our society, and also in my international action, and which I am sharing with you today. Demography can be an opportunity, but on the condition that every girl and woman has the chance to choose their destiny in our societies, any of our societies.

The demographic challenge is also a challenge in providing healthcare for all. France is, and will remain, the second-largest contributor to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. You have my word. I would also like to take the opportunity to pay tribute to the commitment of President Chirac, who enabled France to contribute to the spectacular results in reducing these pandemics. But health is not just about access to medication, it is the implementation of a genuine healthcare system, as certain countries, such as Rwanda, have succeeded in doing. And there again, in this field, we need a paradigm shift. Africa does not just need us to send foreign doctors and nurses, sometimes this is necessary, and we will continue to do this, but these

to send foreign doctors and nurses, sometimes this is necessary, and we will continue to do this, but these doctors exist in Africa, they are trained, and often very well trained in Africa. Take, for example, Senegal and Tunisia.

What Africa needs is funding to open healthcare structures where these doctors can practice with the best technologies. We need to develop telemedicine, key infrastructure. For this, I will ask the French private investment funds, French insurers, to offer African countries the chance to become the foremost stakeholders in African healthcare champions. In concrete terms, I want French private funds to be used to open high-quality clinics in Abidjan, Dakar and Ouagadougou. This, too, must be France's role.

As regards health, we also stand alongside those who are combatting trafficking in counterfeit medicines, which is a pan-African problem which not only affects the ill but also often the poorest, adding to the injustice. I want this combat, which France began with several other countries in Cotonou in 2009, to continue and be stepped up in order to eradicate this scourge.

Finally, the threat which can increase all others and make them unattainable is climate change. It is not a whim for developed countries, it is not a concern just there to fill some people's daily lives – no, it is critical, as it can transform and cause upheaval in entire regions, in the Pacific, or in Africa. Africa, from the shores of Lake Chad to the Congo Basin, is being hardest hit by the effects of climate change, but, my friends, it can also be at the forefront of solutions, it can succeed where Europe has not always been able to.

The Minister of State is accompanying me here and leading this battle alongside the Ministre d'Etat. This is why I called for Africa to join us at the summit in Paris on 12 December 2017. We shall have concrete projects, and African projects in particular, which we shall provide with concrete funding from the public and private sectors to get rapid results.

I would like France, through its companies and operators, to be Africa's special partner in the field of climate change adaptation. I am particularly thinking of renewable energy; and this is the point I will be making when I inaugurate Zagtouli's solar power plant with President Kaboré tomorrow. Through this project, I am proud to think that France and other European countries will be helping, alongside Burkina Faso's government, to change lives a little, change the daily reality of power cuts and make energy more accessible and cleaner.

The fight against global warming must be a breeding ground for innovation and entrepreneurship, a common challenge where we have to succeed together, where training must be stepped up, where new investment must be increased. It is not simply something you will have to passively endure, along with the whole planet. No, it is a challenge we have got to succeed at together.

This is why I want Africa to be a place of radical innovation, of financing for this radical innovation in the fight against global warming, and I want Africa to play its full role, not just in Paris on 12 December but as part of the Global Pact for the Environment, which France launched and which needs to be promoted in the UN framework.

I am also thinking of sustainable cities – there will be 500 million more city dwellers on the continent by 2025; no-one has ever addressed such a challenge. It will be your, our challenge. It may be an opportunity and it may be a disaster.

I am personally convinced that it is in Africa that tomorrow's sustainable cities are being invented. This is why I shall be making sustainable cities the major issue of the next Africa-France summit, which I shall host in France in 2020. It will be an opportunity for me not only to convene the Heads of State and Government but also to extend this meeting to other players, such as the mayors of major French and African agglomerations, businesses and civil society, so that, here too, it produces concrete partnerships that will allow us to make a success of this sustainable city challenge and innovatively address the challenge of the 21st-century African city – that is essential.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends, in order to deal with these threats, as you can see, there is a response: shared, resolute, clear-sighted action on each of the challenges I have just mentioned, while candidly setting out to you the importance of what has to be done on both sides. I am not being prescriptive, I am telling you what part I will play, I am also telling you, very frankly, what your part will be – the habits which will sometimes have to be broken with, the false discourse we have sometimes been caught up in.

But there is also something completely new, a path we have never gone down together until now: shared empowerment, taking a risk, a risk which was hidden until now, which I was indirectly talking about earlier: young people. It is this element of risk which will allow us to create, dare to prepare the future and together bring about two fundamental revolutions for the African continent: the mobility revolution – that far-reaching revolution we must redesign – and the innovation revolution.

The mobility revolution is what will allow us to redesign not only our ties but also the movement of women and men in Africa, and between Africa and Europe.

Mobility is firstly about student mobility, and I know your expectations here. France is very often the number one destination, I want it to remain the number one destination – not out of habit, but out of choice, out of a desire, not necessarily for all studies, but to enrich the exchanges between our countries. To achieve this, I want France to welcome you better, which means offering places and training courses in the subjects matching your needs, and providing the conditions for genuine movement on a long-term basis.

I make that commitment before you today. I would like all those who gain qualifications in France to be able to come back when they wish and as often as they wish, thanks to longer-duration travel visas, because studying in France is part of a special relationship which must continue and not be subject to a cut-off date.

We must rethink the whole of this mobility. I too often see young Africans coming to study or indeed apply for student visas to remain in France. That is not the right way, it is not the right approach, and France cannot take them in over the long term. And I shall be uncompromising on this, because it circumvents the rules. I see students who want access to training courses in France; I tell them, “we are going to better tailor the system to meet your needs”. And then, I see two anomalies. Once they have received training and studied in France, once we have invested, there is a cut-off date and they have to come back, even though they want to continue their studies in France. We have to put an end to this and facilitate careers and fluidity, and allow them to stay in a more flexible way, even though improvements have been made in recent years.

Yet sometimes they are afraid to return to their country, because they tell themselves: “if I go back, I shall no longer be able to return to France. I am losing the advantage of already being here.” And their countries do not benefit from them, Africa does not benefit from what they have learned, and that too is wrong for everyone. The long-duration travel visa will allow these chosen, organized returns, and will allow free mobility rather than forced mobility and the terrible routes I mentioned earlier.

I also plan to help increase the presence of our college institutions here, in conjunction and in partnership with you. Boosting the number of your colleges and university courses means bringing in more partnerships, exchanges, joint training programmes and dual degrees, which will meet your expectations and allow each of us to better learn from the other. I have asked my two ministers of National Education and of Higher Education, Research and Innovation to work at doubling the number of academic partnerships we have with Africa.

If the École Polytechnique has launched partnerships in Côte d’Ivoire, other French schools, other universities can do so as well, and here I welcome the efforts made to forge closer ties between a French higher-education institution and Ouagadougou’s École d’Ingénieurs de 2iE. These closer ties – and I reiterate to you our total commitment to this project – will allow us to enhance its status as a major engineering school of key importance in Africa in the areas of water, energy and the environment.

I am calling on universities and French business, engineering and management schools to waste no more time and come and meet you to develop these French-African courses to which our young people on both sides aspire.

And this profound change, which consists in reviewing, revolutionizing our whole way of thinking, is essential. I do not want a young Burkinabé, the moment he says to himself, “I am going to study”, to have only one choice: to go and study in France! No. I want him to be able to pursue all his studies in Burkina if he wants. So we have to launch all these partnerships; we have to increase the number of online courses, partnerships and dual degrees that will make it possible here in Ouagadougou to gain a qualification from a French university, because there will be a partnership. And if he wants to go to France, it will be to do a special training course or because he chooses to go, not because he is forced to.

We owe you this profound change, because we owe you 2iE access to the same content. If Francophonie has a purpose – and this is the project it must promote – it is to allow all French-speaking students to access to the same resources to carry out their projects and studies. This is why I asked the University Agency for Francophonie (AUF) to join me. I want it to become the entry point to provide you all with access to a digital library of knowledge and training courses.

We shall create access to this library via the francophone digital campuses. I know they exist. There is one right here at Joseph Ki-Zerbo University. We shall strengthen them by involving mobile phone operators and access providers, in order to give you, on these campuses, the best high-speed Internet connection points. The goal is to access the same textbooks, the same content in Lyon, Bordeaux, Bobo-Dioulasso and Ouagadougou.

Mobility means not only studies, it means wider movement, two-way movement, the targeted movement of talented people. I would therefore like France to welcome 1,000 new talented people every year in the field of

start-ups, research, and innovation in culture and sport.

Let me reassure you: I am not saying they must only go and succeed in France! No, I am saying France should speed up their success, so that they can then come back and greatly extend their efforts and their success. This Skills Passport and the visa that goes with it should enable this freedom of movement allowing all the men and women in this hall – who want to succeed and transform things – to access the platform of the French-speaking world, access all the opportunities for success in France, in order to build on this, come back and pull Africa forward.

Likewise, I would also like more young French people to come and work in Africa. From 2018 onwards, Business France will increase the number of young French volunteers working in business companies in Africa. I shall also be asking our embassies to recruit more volunteers, giving priority to candidates who speak or have begun to learn an African language.

The entry point for this two-way mobility will be here in Ouagadougou: the Maison de la Jeunesse that I have decided to create, a place accessible to everyone, in the centre of your capital, which will be specifically dedicated to you. I would like to thank the Burkinabé authorities for their support in implementing this project. We are going to speed things up considerably in the coming months.

This Maison de la Jeunesse will be opened before 14 July 2018, and you will be able to inaugurate it officially on that date. It will bring together Campus France, France Volontaires, research institutions and an incubator for young entrepreneurs. It is all aimed at young people and will enable them, not only to be welcomed but also to succeed, study, make, create businesses, be informed and reach out to the rest of the world. It will be for you.

The second revolution we can spearhead together, the revolution that will give a boost to young people, is innovation and, with it, entrepreneurship. It is the only revolution that can create the 450 million jobs Africa will need by 2050.

France will step up to the plate in concrete terms by devoting more than €1 billion to supporting African SMEs. Through this initiative, the Agence Française de Développement and Bpifrance – I would like to thank their two leaders who are accompanying me – along with, I hope, French private investment funds, will be the first partners of young African businesses.

To be precise, this fund we are going to create will allow us, together with the Agence Française de Développement and Bpifrance, to secure even more than €1 billion. I want us to multiply this target by 10 by involving private funds, other European partners and private European funds, in order to have a package enabling us to finance projects by African entrepreneurs and innovators.

First of all in the digital sector – that is the purpose of the Digital Africa programme, which will enable us to identify the most promising African start-ups and support their growth. Also in agriculture, which Africa desperately needs. Agriculture employs more than 60% of the active population. It is the sector in which we must invest. This initiative will finance African SMEs that will speed up the transformation of African agriculture. We must speed up these transformations and transitions everywhere, through this initiative and the assistance we provide.

In general terms, the initiative will be aimed especially – as you will also have understood – at women entrepreneurs.

France will also step up to the plate by investing in the African infrastructure of tomorrow. That is the purpose of the efforts we have provided to finance major investment projects like the Dakar urban train, the Abidjan metro and the Casablanca metro.

It is also the purpose of the €300-million fund to support infrastructure projects in Africa, which will make its first investments in the next few weeks.

The European Union and African Union in particular, with operators like the AfDB, must also continue developing this on the ground. Throughout Africa we must develop growth infrastructure, digital infrastructure, transport infrastructure and energy infrastructure. This battle, initiated partly by France a few years ago, must now go through a new phase: no longer grand statements but implementation with major regional donors and with regional banks, so that this infrastructure is effectively deployed on the ground wherever necessary.

I want Africa to be a priority of French economic diplomacy. I want French businesses to invest more in Africa, not only the major groups that you know but also SMEs and entrepreneurs, and several of them are also accompanying, or more precisely making up, my delegation.

For several reasons: because, here too, I want them to change their own vision of Africa but also change yours. I want the French and European economic players deploying and investing in Africa to do so differently. The French government's support will be granted with quid pro quos. Indeed, I would like French businesses to spearhead an exemplary partnership, an exemplary partnership that rejects corruption, follows calls for tender and respects the rules laid down by African institutions like the Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa (OHADA) that promote good governance.

Those French businesses which come to invest in Africa and develop, and which have the French government's support, will be exemplary, because I shall also ask them to invest in vocational training; it will be a condition I shall set our businesses.

To benefit from the French government's support, they will have to commit in the long term, fund grants, pledge to develop tenders that address training needs, and finally give priority to local employment. Make no mistake, and I say this to young Africans: do not make the mistakes we made together in the past. There can be no Eldorado of investment and unilateral growth, and there can be no State or business investments when the interests of that State are the only goal.

France will no longer invest solely in order to conduct government-to-government transactions with no benefits for local people. It will no longer invest and allow major groups sometimes to take part in organized corruption. It will no longer invest without there being any benefits for young people from what happens and who invests. France and its businesses will no longer invest without local employment being developed and commitments made; but it will be vigilant – along with you, Mr. President, and all African leaders and young people – to ensure that others today do not replicate, sometimes with an incredible kind of fascination, the mistakes we made together in the past. Those mistakes will happen with new investors, with companies which provide billions but not one job for Africans, which provide billions while repeating the same mistakes as in the past and which may appear to be easy solutions for today but which replicate the turmoil, mistakes and sometimes crimes of the past. For investors from all over the world, and for the whole African continent, I want us to share this requirement I shall have for France.

The precondition for this innovation is research; I would like the conditions to be created to enable African and European researchers to work together on common programmes. What has been done successfully in the European Union framework, with the European Research Council, should be extended to African universities.

We must provide the financial means to organize networks of European and African researchers. This is one of the issues I shall champion at the Abidjan summit, where President Kaboré and I will be tomorrow.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to finish by talking about how, together, we can place these new relations of friendship on a long-term footing, over and above threats, fears and our shared interests. Today we have, in a way, lost our shared imagination. We suffer from an imagination that confines us to our conflicts, sometimes to our traumas, an imagination that is no longer either your or ours; and I want to rebuild this shared and future imagination on the basis of three remedies.

The first remedy is culture. In this area, I cannot accept that a large share of several African countries' cultural heritage be kept in France. There are historical explanations for it, but there is no valid, lasting and unconditional justification. African heritage cannot solely exist in private collections and European museums. African heritage must be showcased in Paris but also in Dakar, Lagos and Cotonou; this will be one of my priorities. Within five years I want the conditions to exist for temporary or permanent returns of African heritage to Africa.

This will also mean major work and a scientific and museum partnership, because – make no mistake – in many African countries it is sometimes African curators who have organized trafficking, and it is sometimes European curators or collectors who have saved those African artworks for Africa by protecting them from African traffickers. Our mutual history is sometimes more complex than we may instinctively think!

The best tribute I can pay, not only to those artists but also to those Africans and Europeans who fought to safeguard those works, is to do everything possible to bring them back. It is also to do everything possible to ensure that there is security and that care is taken in Africa to protect those works. So these partnerships will also take every precaution to ensure that there are well-trained curators, academic commitments and government-to-government commitments to protect those works of art – in other words, your history, your heritage and, if you will allow me to say so, our heritage.

Culture must also enable us to change the vision we have of one another, and with this goal in mind I have decided to launch a African Cultural Season in France in 2020. What is this Season? It is a simple observation – as one of the members of the Presidential Council for Africa was telling me – to say: in France, if you want to get to know Africa, you can go to the Musée du Quai Branly or many other museums, and you can see the

Africa I myself have never known, you can see the Africa of 500 or 1,000 years ago, but you cannot see Africa's contemporary art scene, and that is true!

And so we do not know Africa, French young people know very little about Africa, they are starting to get to know its literature – I will come back to this – but they know little about its painting, its theatrical, cinematic and sculptural vitality, or the richness of all its artistic creativity. And so this unprecedented African Cultural Season in France must provide an opportunity for us to raise awareness in France, among young French people, of the creativity of the young African generations in terms of fashion, music, cinema and design.

I also want this Cultural Season to be an opportunity to promote another form of history, and I say this with great solemnity at this university. The history of Africa cannot only be written by European specialists on Africa, and we must promote, continue and help complete a history of Africa written by Africans. I have in mind, of course, African history and historiography, which is essential, and once again, your university bears the name of one of its eminent figures, but I also have in mind Africa's history through its cinema.

The pioneers of African cinema, from Paulin Soumanou Vieyra to Usman Sembène, fought so that the voice of an independent Africa could be heard, free to look at itself. We must continue to have a culture, a willingness to assume this free outlook. France carefully preserves this outlook within its African Film Archives, which contain almost 1,700 films co-produced by France in over 30 countries. I want to make these memories of Africa and its cinema available to young people in both Africa and France – this will be one of the main goals of the African Cultural Season.

The second element in this shared adventure is sport. In 2024 France will welcome the whole world to Paris, and of course I hope the French athletes excel, but I also hope that the Olympic Games can promote the excellence of African sport. To do this, top-level African athletes must have the resources to fully develop their potential. That is why I have asked the French Olympic Games Organizing Committee to immediately set out a plan to allow African athletes to train in France, using our best facilities.

But I also want Africa to be able to create the best sporting facilities for its athletes and its young people, sustainable facilities which will remain in use once the given international sporting event is over. Therefore as part of the organization of these 2024 Olympic Games, in collaboration with the International Olympic Committee and under this partnership between the European Union and African Union, I want France to organize the development of and investment in this sporting infrastructure and these facilities.

This initiative, which I want to extend across Europe, will recognize sport as a powerful driver for development and growth in African economies. The economics of sport must not only be about selling millions of football shirts, even when they are of the top European teams, which is often the case in many African cities, although of course I would not complain about Olympique de Marseille team shirts being sold, but these economics must also be about the development of a genuine economic sector here in Africa.

In addition, young Africans must have infrastructure enabling them to train for the Olympics, but in this time period open to us we must have a genuine shared strategy to develop this economic sector and this creation of wealth. In the weeks ahead, I will promote an initiative assembling leading stakeholders from the sporting world, to encourage investment both in the area of sporting equipment and in athletes in the African economy.

Finally, what unites us here today in this lecture hall, beyond culture and sport, in fact the main link between us, which is so obvious that we barely mention it anymore, is the French language. Yes, it is the French language, but in truth, for a long time now, the French language, our language, is not only French. It has travelled the world, and it is what unites us. Our French language opens doors for us and our language has a future, it is not just heritage to protect, and Africa can play a major role in this future.

Its future, its outreach, its attractiveness no longer belong just to France. Francophonie is a living thing, which extends beyond our borders and whose heart beats somewhere not far from here. And I want you all to realize this, because I am proud of it, I am proud that my mother tongue, to which I owe everything, the language I grew up with, through which I can convince, the language through which someone like me from the provinces can become President of the French Republic because he puts forward arguments and emotions which others believe in, it is also your language.

Be proud of it because it is a language which will allow a girl from Burkina Faso to do the same thing in the future, to convince young people of her generation and take responsibilities, to master something which was not necessarily hers from the start. This is something we share. So very simply, I urge you to make the language come alive, do not see it as a language which some would like to associate with traumatic events, it is not just that because it is the language of your poets, your film directors, your artists – you have already inherited it and made it your own! The French language of Burkina Faso, of Senegal, no longer belongs only to France: it is yours, so use it with pride!

And this Francophonie is not French Francophonie, it has long since escaped France's control. I want a strong, influential Francophonie which is a beacon, which conquers because it belongs to you. Use it with pride, defend it, add your own words and expressions to it, transform it, change it as you see fit! Because to be frank, the French we have all learnt was at one time set in stone by an academy as an instrument of power, even though the academy does great work in avoiding certain tendencies which confuse the political fight with the anecdote of time.

It carried out important work but prior to this classic French from the academy, French was filled with many dialects and vernaculars – just read some Rabelais and you'll see what I mean! But the French used in Africa, the Caribbean, the Pacific, this colourful French which you have kept alive, it is this which I want to see spread, so use it with pride, do not yield to any arguments wishing to reduce French to a dead language or to fight it under the pretence that it is a language too burdened by a past which does not live up to our own! No, fly the flag for Francophonie and I will stand with you!

It was with this in mind that I have departed from the custom of appointing a Minister as the President of the French Republic's personal representative for Francophonie – I wanted it to be a non-government figure, which is why I asked Leïla Slimani, who is here beside me, to take the position, which she agreed to do. Because she writes in and gives life to this language, our language, on both sides of the Mediterranean, with mixed imaginations, and she belongs to a generation which wants this conquest, which wants to open up this new path which is taking shape.

I have asked her, along with you and anyone who wants to take up the challenge, and naturally in collaboration with the Académie française, whose role I want to welcome, and the personal commitment of Ms Héléne Carrère d'Encausse, who with great discipline and determination upholds our French language and its demands, so in collaboration with the Académie française, I have asked her to gradually compile a Francophone dictionary which is richer and broader than one containing just French from France, and which reflects our Francophonie, which we share with authors, intellectuals, and the creators of all Francophonie.

And with the help of several African intellectuals such as Alain Mabanckou, I want her to think of a new project for Francophonie in order to make it a tool for cultural outreach for African creation, an instrument for economic integration. This is the ambition we must have for Francophonie! The challenge for Francophonie is the will to reinvent a happy future in our shared language, so that we are not limited to the tragic events of the past.

It is this desire to say that we have great opportunities for a wealth of shared culture, creativity and imagination, but also economic opportunities, because we have a linguistic space of unequalled power across all continents and especially in Africa. To restrict oneself to a particular language, to reject the French language because English is more fashionable in Africa is to ignore the future! French will be the number one language in Africa and maybe even the world if we play our cards right in the coming decades, so let's get going and take up the challenge together!

I am not here to lecture you, I am not saying "this is how I want it." I am simply saying that I sincerely believe that it is in all our interests, but it depends on one thing: your will and determination.

I wanted to tell you about this new chapter in the history of Francophonie which we are writing with Leïla Slimani, about this new ambition, and early next year, I will have the opportunity to set out all of its ambitions and to explain this new chapter of Francophonie which I want to write with you.

Let us live up to this challenge, let us be ambitious, and the day after tomorrow I will be in Ghana to explain this approach in an English-speaking country which is turning towards Francophonie, which has made this choice, this step forward. I want us to share this spirit of conquest, I want to see a shared ambition.

Finally, ladies and gentlemen, I believe that when taking leave in Burkina Faso, it is customary to ask the way. And this is what I will do, not only by asking you the way, but also the destinations which we must visit together. At the end of this road, we have the choice between the desire to meet again, and the tragedy of ignoring each other. I suggest not only that we meet again, but that we never again separate.

Felwine Sarr wrote the following fine thought: "Africa has no catching up to do. It must no longer run on tracks laid down by others, but rather walk firmly on its own chosen path." So if you are willing, let us together walk on this path and let us learn to love each other, buoyed by our shared history and future.

That is what I came here today to say, and I do so with great humility. I will make the same proposal tomorrow to my African and European counterparts.

As you know, you will never hear me handing out lessons, nor will you hear from me simplistic words just to please others, but you will always find a shared expectation, because I want to succeed with you. So whatever

we can say about it, this path and this destination is in your hands, because it is you who best know the way.

Thank you very much.