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Speech by the President of the French Republic at the Conference of Ambassadors

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Élysée Palace – Monday, 27 January 2018

Presidents,

Prime Minister,

Ministers,

Members of Parliament,

Ambassadors,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be with you here today to open this Conference of Ambassadors. Pleased because this is always a unique opportunity to share a few convictions and an understanding of the world and where it is going, in which France takes action, must meet expectations, and speaks out on a daily basis.

In a few days, you will be joining your teams in the field and will bear a very great responsibility with high demands and determination.

Your top responsibility will be to represent our country, our history, the ideals of our Republic, our mainland and overseas territories and our interests. And by representing France you represent the history, the strength and the role of our people in the concert of Nations and conduct a diplomacy that should be reliable and innovative.

Your second responsibility, with your team and with the support of all your local partners, will be to implement an ambitious policy for our country. You can be sure that this ambition will give rise to a pace of reform in France that will not slow – quite the contrary, in fact. The Prime Minister will set out the main lines before you. Several Ministers will also discuss this point. Under the leadership of your Minister, Jean-Yves Le Drian, whom I would like to thank for his constant efforts, you will help us support these reforms abroad.

In my eyes, you are stakeholders of the strategy I have asked the government to implement for the country. Firstly, by fully involving our French communities abroad. They are an asset and a strength. Our reforms need to be explained to them and to be supported by them. French citizens abroad are an asset for our country. They need to play a full role in this new French outreach.

That is why I have asked for a profound reflection on French teaching abroad which, on the basis of the report I have asked the government to produce, will give rise to the announcement of reforms in the autumn. It is also why I want to complete the simplification process our citizens want, in terms of online voting and administrative procedures.

Next, you contribute to France's competitiveness. You need to explain to governments and economic actors in the countries where you serve the coherence and the scale of our transformation agenda. Our attractiveness is improving, but we need to be far more active to support our exports. Your mobilization in support of economic diplomacy is a major aspect of this strategy. In particular, we need to focus our collective efforts on an export strategy for small and medium-sized enterprises, which is the only way to reduce our trade deficit

But I expect even more from you. From Ouagadougou to Xi'an, from Sydney to New York, and at Sorbonne University, over the last year I have, in a number of speeches, reviewed our geographical and strategic approaches. These now need to be implemented with precision. That means choosing clear, and therefore limited, objectives, and taking fresh measures to follow them up. We still tend to overly consider that everything

is a priority and not to have a sufficient culture of results. Even in diplomacy, success is not – is no doubt never – measured in one day, but rather by the ability to influence attitudes, build friendships and alliances, and win contracts. In a word, by our ability to advance the interests of France and its people and promote our vision and conception of the world.

That is what our citizens expect, and they rightly want to see the benefits of the policy we are implementing. And that requires a greater ability to anticipate. We are keeping track of the situation in a number of countries and regions, from Venezuela to Burma and from Ukraine to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. But we need to anticipate these situations more, sometimes make bets, and propose initiatives. I call upon your spirit of proactivity, analysis and action. Never hesitate to put forward your ideas, for that is the best way not to be subjected to others' wills.

I believe you have understood that I have high expectations of you. We are working in a context that must be apprehended coolly and clear-headedly. Coolly, because the aim is not to change our strategy whenever an external event occurs. And clear-headedly, because we must not, however, underestimate the world's crises. Yet what has happened over the last year?

France has reaffirmed its ambition, vision and project for Europe. France has proposed a protective, more sovereign, united and democratic Europe; yet at the same time, extremisms have gained ground and nationalisms have awoken. Is that a reason to give up? Certainly not. Is it a reason to say that we have made a mistake? On the contrary! We are paying the price for decades European weakness and failure to always offer enough. In reality, we have to step up our efforts. I will come back to this.

France has also been the proponent of a strong multilateralism. Yet the multilateral system inherited from the last century is being undermined by major players and authoritarian powers that increasingly exercise a power of fascination. Should we surrender? Should France respond if this or that country chooses a certain direction, or if another sovereign power decides differently from what we believe in? France's responsibility is to make its voice heard and to defend its position. Not to speak in the name of others. We therefore need to take new initiatives, build new alliances and engage in debates at the right level if we are to apprehend all of today's challenges. The right level is, of course, that of a civilizational debate, defending our values and interests.

Speaking before you last year, I set out the four goals of our diplomatic action, in my policy for the Nation: the security of our citizens, the promotion of common goods, the influence and attractiveness of our country, and, lastly, a new European ambition.

These goals still stand, but circumstances are testing the robustness of our principles and the steadfastness of our action. Today, I would like to stress what we have done in this framework, and the Minister will address this in greater detail before you. But I also want to say how I envisage our response to this two-fold crisis of multilateralism and Europe. For yes, today more than a year ago, we are now at a moment of truth.

For the safety of the French people, first and foremost.

That is of course our priority, with a focus on the fight against terrorism. To combat Islamist terrorism, we have passed new legislation for France. As announced here a year ago, we organized a conference to combat the financing of terrorism, held at the OECD in spring, and Australia has agreed to hold a second conference on the subject. I ask you to contribute to the follow-up to the implementation of the Paris Agenda with all our partners. We have already achieved some initial results, such as on the tracking of transactions, which were previously opaque, with a direct impact on our country. We now need to continue this work tirelessly.

But when we speak of the fight against terrorism, we must of course come back to our policy in the Sahel and in the Middle East where terrorist groups are thriving, threatening regional stability and also striking us directly, organizing attacks in our country.

In the Sahel, we have maintained our military commitment through Operation Barkhane. I would like to commend all our soldiers who have been committed in this difficult theatre of operations since 2013. Their presence, and that of MINUSMA, have helped avoid the worst in the region and enabled elections to be held this month in Mali. In recent months, we have achieved major victories in the Sahel against the terrorist presence, but this action must continue with the same intensity, supplementing the presence of Operation Barkhane with several focuses that began in July 2017.

Firstly, we have supported and boosted the creation of the G5 Sahel Joint Force. I am convinced that our military action will be even more efficient if it is better coordinated with the involvement of the five Sahel countries concerned. We have raised funds and encouraged the Force's first operations. I have made several visits to witness for myself the progress, and, together with all of the Heads of State and Government involved, we have improved our organization.

This organization is the only one which will provide stability in the long term because it fully involves the five Sahel countries concerned in their own security. We must ensure that it is rolled out and over the coming weeks and months we will have to carry out new joint operations with the G5 Force. We must also enhance cooperation with Algeria, which is exposed to the same terrorist threat, as well as Nigeria and Cameroon, which are fighting Boko Haram.

Secondly, we have encouraged the increasing power of the African Union. I made the case for this last July at the Nouakchott Summit in front of the African Union and I will have the opportunity to discuss it in the near future with President Trump and President Kagame, Chairperson of the African Union. We must work on creating credible African peace operations, guarantee stable and predictable financing, particularly between the United Nations, the African Union and sub-regional organizations.

Thirdly, we have also bolstered our military action by enhancing and streamlining our development action through the creation of the Sahel Alliance with Germany and several other international donors. These are the 3 complementary Ds of Diplomacy, Development and Defence that I spoke about last year. We have started to roll out the first operations for education, agriculture, the wider economy, in several countries in the region where every gain in territory from the enemy must be accompanied by new projects giving economic, educational and life opportunities for populations which, at a point in time, could have been won over by the enemy.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the action carried out and the results obtained in Mauritania, Niger and Chad. In the coming months, we must give our utmost support to ensuring stability and recapturing certain regions in Mali and Burkina Faso.

The fourth point I would like to make is that we cannot genuinely solve the Sahel issue while Libya remains unstable. The breakdown of society in Libya since 2011 has led to the formation of organized trafficking routes for drugs, human beings and weapons. The whole Sahel and Sahara region has always been a region of trade and trafficking but these routes are today paths of misery and terrorism. Until we achieve stability in Libya, it will be impossible to sustainably stabilize the Sahel. It is these routes that finance and enable the terrorists.

We have taken several initiatives to respond to this situation. Firstly, by fighting this trafficking and the networks of traffickers in collaboration with the African Union and the International Organization for Migration/

Secondly, by bringing together Mr Sarraj and Mr Haftar in France in July 2017 and then, for the first time, the four major Libyan leaders in May this year, surrounded by the international community, to commit to a common political process.

I firmly believe in the unity of Libyan and the restoration of Libyan sovereignty. This is an essential component of the efforts to stabilize the region and therefore fight terrorists and traffickers. The coming months will be decisive in this regard as they will require our involvement to support the remarkable work of the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ghassan Salamé, to avoid any temptation of divisions, because this country has become, deep down, the theatre for every influence and external interest. Our role for our security and the security of the region is to successfully fulfill the Paris Agreement as decided by the four stakeholders in May.

The other theatre in our fight against terrorism is, of course, Syria. The situation in Syria remains extremely serious and concerning. France is very active from a diplomatic standpoint, from New York to Geneva, and in all the capitals concerned. We have significantly increased our humanitarian assistance. A ceasefire is now essential but the sustainable solution to this conflict has to be political, that we can be sure of.

France was the first country to propose bringing the positions of the Western and Arab States on the one hand and those of the three "Astana guarantors" on the other. We included Germany and Egypt in the "small group" which will hold another ministerial meeting in September with the United States, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia and Jordan. We have enhanced our dialogue with Turkey on Syria to a historic level, despite our deep-rooted differences on the north-east region. The coordination mechanism created in St Petersburg with Russia has borne its first fruits, particularly from a humanitarian standpoint, without compromising on our principles and through non-governmental organizations leading humanitarian operations on the ground.

I would therefore like to commend the remarkable and courageous work of all the NGOs on the ground.

Therefore, many things have changed. I believe we have managed to rebuild an essential European pathway, but we must not make any mistakes, we are at the hour of truth on this issue. There is doubtless a key humanitarian challenge in the Idlib region as we move into the last months of the conflict. And we are at a crossroads to implement this inclusive political solution in which we believe and which alone will enable the Eastern Christians but also the Kurds, the Yazidis and all the other ethnic and religious minorities, to have a

place in tomorrow's Syria.

Our lines on the Syrian conflict are clear: the fight against Daesh and the terrorist groups threatening Europe's security, support for civilian populations and the promotion of an inclusive diplomatic roadmap, in collaboration with the United Nations.

I have tasked my Personal Envoy on Syria, Ambassador François Sénémaud with making progress on these objectives in collaboration with all the ministries concerned. But the current situation is alarming, because the regime threatens to create a new humanitarian disaster in the Idlib region and has not to date shown any desire to negotiate a political transition. This means we will have to further increase the pressure on the regime and its allies and I have high expectations of Russia and Turkey in this regard, given their role and the commitments they have made.

Those who would, once the war on Daesh is over, facilitate a return to the status quo are clearly identifiable. Bashar al-Assad would stay in power, the refugees in Jordan, Libya and Turkey would return home and Europe and some others would rebuild.

While I have always accepted that our number one enemy has been Daesh and that I never made the destitution of Bashar al-Assad a prerequisite for our diplomatic or humanitarian action, I think that such a scenario would nevertheless be a disastrous mistake. Who caused these millions of people to be displaced? Who massacred his own people? It is not France's responsibility to appoint the future leaders of Syria any more than it is the responsibility of any other country. But it is our responsibility and our prerogative to ensure that the Syrian people will be in a position to do so.

That is why the condition for Syria's unity and stability, and therefore for the ultimate eradication of Islamist terrorism, is building this inclusive political solution through constitutional reform and the implementation of an electoral process enabling all Syrians, including and especially those who have fled the Bashar al-Assad regime, to choose their own leader. This action and these principles are to my mind crucial to our current and future security. For what has enabled terrorist groups, whether it be al-Qaeda, Daesh or al-Nusra, to prosper?

Poverty, authoritarian regimes no longer protecting their peoples, widespread corruption, and also foreign powers not respecting these countries' sovereignty have fuelled the very discourse of the Islamists, the exploitation of all the different frustrations and anti-Western speech. So let us not repeat these mistakes. Let us respect Syria's sovereignty – but truly respect it – by allowing people to express themselves and embody this sovereignty. This is the meaning of the diplomatic and political struggle we must conduct alongside the United Nations Secretary-General's Representative, Staffan de Mistura, to get the Syrians, the Small Group, the participants in the Astana dialogue and the States in the region to converge around a same inclusive road map, the implementation of which alone can produce sustainable peace.

Of course, stability of the region will also depend on our ability to deal with Iranian issues. I have just spoken again with President Rohani about the crisis in the Gulf, the conflict in Yemen and the Israeli-Palestinian issue, which absolutely remains central and worrying.

I do not want to spend too much time on these essential points here and will have the opportunity to share my views in the coming weeks by launching tangible initiatives with you.

Still along these main lines: our security and our world view require stability in the Middle East. This stability can only be built if there is ethnic, religious and political pluralism and if all stakeholders work together. It therefore requires both our involvement and our resolve in ensuring that everyone's dignity and human rights are respected, but also our humility because at no time can we replace the sovereignty of the States concerned. That is the reasoning behind our work with Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt in recent months. That is why people will listen to us and why we will be able to remain effective.

When we speak about our action with regard to the security of the French people in today's environment we are also pursuing our commitment to fight chemical weapons and nuclear proliferation.

We have created an international partnership against impunity with regard to chemical weapons. We drove the European solidarity efforts to support the United Kingdom after the Salisbury attack. We helped create a new mechanism in June for attributing responsibility for such attacks within the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, whose headquarters I had visited a few months earlier. These actions were necessary because we know how much the role and monitoring of this Organisation have been challenged by certain actors and how recent reforms have made it more vulnerable.

France has kept its word and adhered to its main lines. When the Syrian regime bombed its population with chemical weapons, we carried out several strikes on its facilities during the night between 13 and 14 April 2018

with our British and American allies, and we will continue to act accordingly in the event of proven use of such weapons.

We have fought nuclear proliferation by supporting the opening up between North Korea and the United States through a cautious policy and by committing, contrary to the United States' decision, to maintaining the nuclear deal with Iran.

It was France that, during this same meeting last year, proposed the path of broader negotiations with Iran concerning the four pillars that you know and that I explained to you then.

This approach is advancing today and is a compass that the new partners follow. We will do everything we can for it to help prevent a serious crisis in the months ahead. A considerable diplomatic effort will eventually be needed to establish a new stability framework. Our closely coordinated action, particularly with the United Kingdom, Germany and the European Union, is now to preserve what the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran has enabled and to consolidate it by opening fresh, even more demanding negotiations.

France will shoulder its responsibilities regarding Iran, uncompromisingly and without naivety, by maintaining close dialogue with our partners, which include the Gulf States.

When we speak of our security, we are also speaking of Europe's security with regard to external risks.

In this regard, over the past year, we have moved forward at a much faster pace than in the last 60 years. We have made unprecedented progress, including strengthening our common defence policy since the summer of 2017, creating a defence fund to finance tangible initiatives, concluding two strategic agreements concerning tanks and combat aircraft with Germany, and concluding with eight other Member States the European Intervention Initiative that I proposed in September 2017 to promote the idea of defence between Europeans. Europe has never progressed as quickly when it comes to defence.

Europe has realized that it has to protect itself and France has shouldered its full responsibilities in this realm, through the military defence budget signed into law on 14 July 2018, which provides an updated strategic vision of these new threats facing our country and realistic means to address them.

France and Europe have identified the new modern-day threats and realized that we need strategic and defensive autonomy to address them.

In the coming months, I plan to spearhead a project to strengthen European solidarity in security matters. We should give more substance to Article 42(7) of the Treaty on European Union, invoked by France for the first time in 2015, after the terrorist attacks. France is ready to enter into concrete discussions with European States on the nature of reciprocal solidarity and mutual defence relations under our Treaty commitments. Europe can no longer entrust its security to the United States alone. It is up to us to assume our responsibilities and to guarantee European security and, thereby, sovereignty.

We must fully take on board the consequences of the end of the Cold War. Allies today are still extremely important, but balances, and sometimes the reflexes on which they were built, need to be reviewed. And that also means that Europe should act accordingly. This enhanced solidarity will involve a review of the European defence and security architecture. This will include initiating renewed dialogue on cyber security, chemical weapons, conventional weapons, territorial conflicts, space security and the protection of polar regions, especially with Russia.

I would like us to engage in broad discussions on these issues with all of our European partners, and therefore with Russia. Substantial progress towards resolving the Ukraine crisis, and compliance with the OSCE framework – I am thinking particularly of the situation of the observers in the Donbass – will clearly be the prior conditions necessary for real progress with Moscow. But that should not prevent us from working between Europeans starting today. I am counting on you to do this.

We will also revisit this European architecture, reaffirming the relevance of the Council of Europe – France will chair its Committee of Ministers in 2019 – and the relevance of our democratic values. We must not give in to the forms of fascination – which we are seeing more or less throughout the European Union – for illiberal democracies or types of efficiency that involve abandoning our principles. No. Our security is rooted in the reaffirmation of our values, of human rights, which are the very cornerstone not only of the Council of Europe but also of the European Union, and in defending all those who uphold them everyday, including NGOs, intellectuals, artists, activists and journalists. Here too, we will have several initiatives to adopt on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

The second goal I assigned for our diplomats a year ago was to promote common goods: the protection of our planet. culture. the education of our children. public health. trade and cyber space. all of which are aspects of

planet, culture, the education of our children, peace, health, seas and cyber space, all of which are aspects of our global heritage that must be defended. But in order to do so, we need collective rules that are accepted by all; these are essential for smooth cooperation and hence to progress in defending those common goods. But the leading threat to our common goods is the crisis of multilateralism itself.

Indeed, multilateralism is undergoing a major crisis, with an impact on all of our diplomatic efforts – primarily because of US policy. Doubts concerning NATO; the aggressive unilateral trade policy almost leading to a trade war with China, Europe and a few others; withdrawal from the Paris agreement; and denunciation of the nuclear agreement with Iran are all examples of this. The partner with which Europe built the post-war multilateral order seems to be turning its back on this shared history. France has always been the first and the most forthright country when it comes to expressing its opposition to these decisions, always working to persuade before such decisions are taken, and to maintain the crucial high-quality dialogue between our two countries. And I fully stand by this approach.

While participating actively in traditional multilateralism, China, for its part, is promoting its own world view, its own vision of a reinvented, more hegemonic multilateralism. Other powers are not really playing the game in multilateral cooperation, and for them, the collapse of this supposedly Western order will not be overly problematic.

In this context, France is sometimes criticized for continuing its dialogue, its efforts with the United States, yet it is obvious – even in the current situation – that dialogue with Washington remains essential. And I must tell you that in my view, the situation is very different from the one that is most often described. First, because the isolationist or rather the unilateralist trend that the United States is currently experiencing is not completely new – it has already existed in the distant past, if you look at Jackson, and it had already begun with the previous administration in certain theatres of operations and in certain parts of the world.

This American position is of course undermining contemporary multilateralism because it is hampering effectiveness and may lead to the emergence of alternative, more hegemonic models incompatible with our values. But in my view, it should be seen as more of a symptom than a cause, a symptom of the crisis of contemporary capitalist globalization and of the liberal Westphalian multilateral model that goes with it.

Globalization and multilateralism have had positive effects that should not be underestimated: they enabled hundreds of millions of the planet's inhabitants to escape poverty, they brought an end to an ideological conflict that divided the world, and they ushered in an unprecedented era of prosperity and freedom and a peaceful expansion of global trade, which is the reality of recent decades. But this economic, social, and political order is in a state of crisis. First, because it was unable to regulate the excesses that were inherent to it: trade imbalances that deeply affected certain regions, which are losing out in globalization; long overlooked environmental disasters; and significant inequalities within and among our societies.

From Brexit to the current US position, it is this same uneasiness with contemporary globalization that is playing out. And the answer, to my mind, is not unilateralism, but rather a reinvention, a new conception of contemporary globalization. This capitalist globalization accelerated financial flows and led to a hyper-concentration of technologies and talents as well as profits, which fostered the emergence of actors who disrupt and undermine our collective rules. It created both big winners and big losers.

And finally, because throughout the world, peoples' deep-seated identities have re-emerged, along with their ideas about their history. That is a fact. Those who believed in the advent of a globalized world whose people would be protected from the wounds of history were deeply mistaken. Throughout the world, the inner psyches of people in each of our countries have resurfaced, and we are seeing this from India to Hungary, from Greece to the United States. Look closer: these inner psyches are often exploited, sometimes inflamed, but they are a reality that says something about the return of the identity of peoples. It is probably a good thing, or at least I believe so.

It is a sign that this undifferentiated globalization was not the answer to everything, that it failed to respond to certain points, and that we must therefore rethink its rules and practices, precisely as a result of these failures and these changes. So the real question isn't whether I will take Donald Trump's arm at the next summit, but how we can collectively grasp this moment of great transformation that we are experiencing and which is facing all of our societies.

The great demographic transformation, which is shaking up Africa and Europe, and indeed, all the continents, it must be said. The great ecological and environmental transformation, more critical than ever. The great shift in inequalities and the great technological transformation. France's role is to propose a humanistic path to meet these challenges, and with Europe, specifically, to propose a new collective organization.

First and foremost, that presumes – and this is a prerequisite, if I may say so – changing our diplomatic approach to some extent. We can no longer be satisfied with monitoring political changes or statements by

traditional actors without attempting to better decode the deep-seated identities, the forces at work and which are determining the course of events in many countries. All too often, we have taken note of things we didn't want to see, the political events over the last few months and years, without questioning our own selves, without looking hard enough at the deep-seated identities, at the collective imaginations of the peoples I just mentioned. I think we must do more of this and reinvent our own methods.

And sometimes the things we don't want to see happen, because there is an underlying logic within peoples. We probably should have a better understanding of this intimacy in order to better anticipate the course of events. But we should also grasp what is progressive and humanistic in these world views, i.e., the paths and means for new initiatives, and in each of these countries we should seek out allies, paths, means of building new cooperation and new alliances.

We must accept that doing this will require alliances of convenience, alliances that are tactical and concrete, depending on the issues, and based on clear principles and objectives, always respecting the national sovereignty of peoples. I have already spoken about this. It limits military interventionism, or more precisely, it means we must always act as part of a dynamic and political project that is as close as possible to the people. But it also means that we must always work to ensure that all non-State actors contribute to this new regulation of the world, that they respect the rules and are not somehow its free-riders or hidden arbiters.

The answer, then, is not unilateralism but rather a way of reorganizing our efforts around a few strategic common goods, and by building new alliances. First and foremost, with regard to the fight against climate change, the Paris Climate Agreement must continue to be defended. Every day, the urgency of this fight is confirmed with the intensification of climate extremes and natural disasters. We are continuing to fight this battle, and we will continue to pursue concrete actions.

The One Planet Summit, which France hosted with the UN and the World Bank on 12 December last year in Paris, made it possible to adopt substantial new financial commitments. That event will be followed up by another international summit on 26 September in New York. We must continue mobilizing all the actors involved in this fight: businesses, NGOs, local governments, and major international foundations.

This fight for the planet will remain central to our foreign policy, as reflected in the attention given to this issue during my visits to the Holy See, to China and India, and in particular with the first summit of the International Solar Alliance that we organized with India. It must also translate it into the negotiation and adoption of a new global pact for the environment, which I consider a priority, and which will imply the commitment of all our diplomats, as well as actively preparing for key stages in biodiversity negotiations in 2019 and 2020. And mobilization on the oceans and the poles will also require the commitment of many diplomatic posts.

Environmental diplomacy is vital to respond to this major upheaval in the world. It is vital because of the French and European commitment in this area; because it is enabling us to form new alliances, especially with China and several other powers, thereby allowing us to build a new form of international cooperation; and because at a very deep level it serves our interests in the short, medium, and long term.

The second universal good that we have again made central to our international cooperation policy is education, culture and knowledge. Indeed, France demonstrated its commitment by co-hosting with Senegal the replenishment conference of the Global Partnership for Education in Dakar a few months ago, which raised more than two billion euros for education in the world, especially for girls, and for which France increased its contribution ten-fold.

In my view, this is our universalist, humanist role, but also the most crucial contribution we could make to addressing the demographic crisis I mentioned earlier. Wherever there is an undue population surge, it is the result of a decline in education, and especially girls' education. And that is something that France must be able to talk about. I was repeatedly attacked when, a little more than a year ago, I addressed this issue in Hamburg, but African leaders themselves courageously took up the subject and stance and are addressing it.

But wherever demography spikes, with seven or eight children per women, forced marriage has resumed and girls' education has declined. And show me countries where young women all choose to have eight or nine children, show them to me, before saying that it is a form of neo-imperialism to raise this issue in Paris. No, we must help those who are speaking about this in each of their capitals.

Fighting for education is the best response to all forms of obscurantism and totalitarianism. Education, culture and intelligence are at the heart of this battle, which we must wage everywhere. It is the only sustainable response to the global demographic challenge. And we will therefore fight at length against inequalities, especially those between men and women. That is why I have made education an absolute priority, both in our country and abroad.

And I deeply believe that on this issue, France has an unprecedented role to play, first of all because of its

And I deeply believe that on this issue, France has an unprecedented role to play, first of all because of its history and tradition. A year ago, we formulated an ambitious education strategy, from the beginning of primary school through to university, that I think lends our country particular credibility in this area. But let's also take a closer look at what we are and the assets we have. Paris is the headquarters of three international organizations that are vital in these areas: UNESCO, whose new Director-General has begun a resolute effort that we strongly support; the OECD, which has acquired unquestionable credibility in evaluating educational performances; and the International Organisation of La Francophonie, which also considers education a strong ambition and one of its priorities.

In the last few years we have launched several projects, including the ALIPH initiative to protect endangered cultural heritage and several others, further enhancing this strength. In addition to this, we have strengthened our role within the Global Partnership for Education which I would like to be even more active and present in Paris; we have everything we need to make France a global knowledge, intellectual and cultural ecosystem that you must promote around the world, through academic, scientific and research cooperation.

I think that it is an essential common good that we must defend, but I believe that it is also an incredible lever of influence for our country.

The third common good is health. In this respect, France will continue to fulfil its commitments by holding the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria Replenishment Conference in Lyon on 10 October 2019. But in the meantime, I would like us to resume, with determination, the important fight against counterfeit drugs that France initiated, and to intensify our involvement in the fight against the major pandemics; I am thinking in particular of the fight against Ebola in Central Africa.

The fourth fundamental common good is the digital space. We must support its development, invest in promoting our strategic and economic interests as well as regulate it so that it is accessible to all and our fundamental rights are protected. This major change is exactly what the Tech for Good summit in Paris in the spring was all about; we will hold this summit every year in order to encourage debate on essential regulations in these new sectors, together with all international stakeholders, and also in order to take action and make concrete commitments. With respect to taxes, privacy, social rights or ethics, we must develop responses that respect countries' sovereignty, by never allowing any economic actor, any area of human activity to escape our sovereign control or attention.

This is the reasoning behind the commitment we made, in particular with the United Kingdom, at the European as well as international level, to combat the spread of terrorist messages and terrorist content. We will continue this regulatory work at the European and international levels, specifically in order to extend best practices in this area. The Internet Governance Forum and the Civic Tech Forum will take place at the same time on 12 November in Paris, allowing us to make progress in these areas. I want to make France a major hub of attractiveness, as well as of discussion and development of these new rules, so that we can discuss common goods and the new rules of globalization.

It is also a matter of discussing our collective organization in the area of trade. International trade is definitely not fair; the collective organization that we have today is not the most efficient, but responding with complete unilateralism and a trade war is the least appropriate answer. The solution must involve a radical restructuring of our international world order. That's why, in May, I invited the OECD to launch a joint working group involving the United States, the EU, China and Japan.

We must clarify the existing rules, improve dispute resolution, adopt more effective regulation at the international level and incorporate our own social and environmental requirements in our trade policy. We cannot have a trade policy that would in some way be considered separate from everything else.

I therefore invite the representatives of these powers to an initial conference on this issue on the sidelines of the Armistice Day events in Paris on 11 November. I think that we will be able to build a more effective and fairer system in a few months; indeed, we cannot give in to the hegemony of one power and the division of all.

Indeed, I believe that our world order can be significantly better regulated with respect to social affairs. And I think that the 100th anniversary of the ILO in 2019 should allow us to go further and to set ourselves a new goal. Wherever globalization is criticized, it is these social aberrations that are attacked. The working classes and the middle classes, in the United Kingdom, and in the United States, as well as in our country, are criticizing the fact that they are being left behind, that this order has led to the inequalities that I just mentioned, which are no longer tenable.

We should therefore think not in terms of one group pitted against another, but develop, as we have in other areas, opportunities for international cooperation, that can help us define common standards; we should therefore think in terms of bringing together the willing, encouraging cooperation among everyone. That's why I want to make the issue of inequality a major focus of France's commitment over the coming year, notably at

the G7, whose Presidency we will hold in 2019.

Our focus is therefore the restructuring of the world order. France and Europe have a historic role to play in this. I do not think that the future of the world will be built on hegemonies, or on theocracies, or new forms of totalitarianism. But that requires a sudden jolt to our democracy. We will not win this battle by simply saying that democracies are by definition right, when we see extremes on the rise everywhere and the world order falling apart. When I talk about strong multilateralism, it means considering what the key challenges are for our citizens and finding an international response to these challenges.

The peace gained at great cost in 1918 broke down during the 1930s as a result of the shortcomings of global governance and the weakening of democracies. That's why I have taken the initiative to invite several heads of state and government to Paris for the 11 November Armistice Day ceremonies; they will inaugurate the first Paris Peace Forum. This forum is aimed at strengthening our collective efforts by bringing States and international organizations, notably the UN, together with civil society: NGOs, businesses, trade unions, experts, intellectuals and religious groups. International governance must be defined in concrete terms, and every citizen can take part in this.

This restructuring requires time for reflection, and I hope we will be able to make this shared call to action a reality on 11 November in Paris. This restructuring also requires us to redesign our organizations, our consultation instruments and our coalitions.

In 2019, France will hold the G7 Presidency. I would like us to update the format and goals. We must establish stronger, constant dialogue – while remaining a coherent group with common levels of development and democratic requirements – with China on climate issues and trade, with India on digital affairs, with Africa on youth affairs. In any event, we must not recreate this theatre of shadows and divisions, which I believe has weakened us more than helped us move forward. I will therefore propose a reform to the other members, in liaison with the United States, which will hold the presidency of the G7 after us in 2020.

All over the world, in Asia, in Latin America, in Africa, there are therefore new balances, new relations that we must rethink on the basis of the in-depth work that I asked you to carry out. In March and May I therefore proposed, in New Delhi and Sydney, that we work on a new Indo-Pacific strategic objective, which must not be directed against anyone, and could be a key contribution to international stability. We are an Indo-Pacific power with more than 8,000 troops in the region and more than a million citizens. We must draw the necessary conclusions and I hope that you can present this link crossing the Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean, by way of Southeast Asia, in a resolute, ambitious and clear manner.

Indeed, we must develop a new relationship with Asia. It will be based in particular on our essential and fruitful dialogue with China. I said that I would go there every year and I laid the foundations for this dialogue a few months ago in Xi'an. China has established one of the most important geopolitical concepts of the last few decades with its new silk roads. We cannot act as if the initiative did not exist. We should not give in to any kind of guilty or short-term fascination: it is a vision of globalization that has its virtues in terms of stabilizing certain regions, but it is a hegemonic system. I therefore want France to be able to provide a balanced approach that will safeguard our interests and our vision of the world in this constructive, demanding and confident dialogue with China.

Our relationship with Japan is also key; Japan will hold the G20 Presidency at the same time that we will hold that of the G7, and it was our most recent guest of honour, alongside Singapore, at the Bastille Day celebrations. The current cultural season in France reflects the strength of our ties. Relations with India, the largest democracy in the world, and with Australia, within the framework of the Indo-Pacific strategy are key. But it is with Africa in particular that we must rebuild these contemporary coalitions I just referred to and therefore our capacity to influence the course of the world.

What Ethiopia, Liberia and Sierra Leone have taught us is that there is nothing inevitable about African instability, whether with respect to internal conflicts or conflicts between neighbours. Africa does not just serve as an interlocutor to discuss the crises affecting it, it is first and foremost our ally in helping to strike an overall balance in tomorrow's world. This is why I am asking you all to take part in this dialogue: relations with Africa, and this is an important message that I want to convey to you, do not just concern our ambassadors in Africa. When I talk about Africa, I am talking about the entire continent with all of its diversity and wealth, as I explained in my speech in Ouagadougou, when I invited talents from our two continents, including young Europeans and Africans, to engage in dialogue on their common future.

Africa is important to France not only because it is our closest neighbour but also because it is part of our identity through our common history and through diasporas that I have planned to meet this autumn. We

believe it is necessary to better involve these diasporas while renewing our relationship with Africa. I am also counting on the contribution of the Presidential Council for Africa, which I would like to commend for its commitment by my side.

Without Africa, we will never win the battle that I mentioned regarding common goods, we will never manage to build these new cooperation projects and alliances for the international order we wish to see. We will never win the battle for diversity or against climate change without African countries' active participation. Next spring, I will visit Nairobi and the UNEP headquarters to build on the momentum of the One Planet Summit on the ground in Africa.

Africa is also a continent where the future of Francophonie will play out, and to a large extent, the future of our language and our cultural influence. That is why I have lent France's support to the candidacy backed by the African Union for the post of Secretary-General of the International Organisation of La Francophonie ahead of the Yerevan Summit of 12 October 2018.

Last July, we launched the African Cultural Season in Lagos, which will be organized in France in 2020 and which will enable Africa, for the first time, to tell its own story in France in all our cultural venues. N'Goné Fall will be the General Commissioner of this cultural season. This autumn I will also receive the report by Bénédicte Savoy and Felwine Sarr on the temporary or definitive return of African cultural heritage to Africa. What we are building in doing so, step by step, and I cannot go into detail about all the points of this policy, is a change in the way our countries see one another. As a result, France will be able to see Africa differently but Africa will also be able to express itself differently, to tell its own history, its own present differently to the world and to build a new intellectual connection between France and Africa.

I believe this to be an essential part of our diplomacy because it is one of the keys to addressing the instability in several African regions and one of the keys to striking a balance in our relationship on every level. Africa is, of course, our Mediterranean neighbour. We pay close attention to the special relationships we have with Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia which I have already visited. I will also have the opportunity to visit Cairo in the coming months when Egypt takes over the Chairmanship of the African Union. I announced at the beginning of the year in Tunisia that a Two Shores Summit would be held, based on the current 5+5 Dialogue but in an even more inclusive format with significant contribution from civil society. Ten years after the Union for the Mediterranean, we must define a different Mediterranean policy by learning from all of our successes and shortcomings and involving civil society to recreate a more inclusive Mediterranean policy. This is doubtless one of the conditions for reconsolidating the Maghreb region. This policy is key for tackling issues around young people, mobility, energy, academic exchanges and we will, in the coming months, prepare this Summit which will be held in Marseille in early summer 2019.

Our third objective, ladies and gentlemen, is to enhance France's influence in this context. I mentioned at the beginning of my speech the importance of economic diplomacy. Our country has, of course, attracted more investment, tourism and talent this year but we still have many challenges ahead. France has also made progress in sports winning the bid for the 2024 Olympic Games and through the French football team's victory at the World Cup. This victory and the way in which our players and citizens celebrated it only increase the expectations towards France.

Your efforts have played an active role in increasing France's attractiveness in all fields. They were supported by unprecedented events that we organized at the beginning of this year in Versailles, Paris and elsewhere, and the investment in the Choose France summit on new technologies with Vivatch or on Artificial Intelligence with the presentation of the French strategy in front of numerous international specialists at the end of the winter. I expect you to be involved in following up these events which we will repeat every year and which require several concrete steps.

Important announcements were made on these occasions by several large foreign companies, showing that it is possible to get them to work in France by developing a demanding dialogue on the most complex aspects: security, taxation and the digital economy. And I also wanted to continue this with France hosting the 2023 WorldSkills and I want all of our embassies to get involved in supporting our candidacy as this also helps essential economic outreach.

At the same time, it is essential more than ever to promote our culture and language. This is something I have said several times. We have left behind a defensive vision of language to finally promote a robust, pro-active policy for the promotion of French and multilingualism, which gives all the necessary importance to regional languages, which fully recognizes the role of authors from Africa and around the world in French-language literary creation.

In light of this, I would like to thank my personal representative for Francophonie, Leïla Slimani, for her work in this field. Our cooperation efforts on the ground have been telling us for several years that we needed a paradigm shift. This is also why I have decided to maintain our cultural cooperation budget at the same level in

percentage since this is also why I have decided to maintain our external cooperation budget at the same level in 2019 for the second consecutive year.

We have already brought about a 50% increase in the number of hours of French classes offered to refugees, increased the number of bilingual schools abroad with the France Education label by 20%, brought together all operators concerned in a consortium responsible for training teachers in francophone Africa. I would also like to welcome the creation of a Francophone Chair at the Collège de France. We have made considerable progress. This is also promoted by the hard work of the journalists at France Médias Monde and I intend to follow this up and ask you to double down on your work in this field, in cooperation with the International Organisation of La Francophonie and in collaboration with operators including TV5 Monde and the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie.

All these activities of influence will only be possible and effective alongside the economic diplomacy I spoke about earlier if we give new momentum to our development assistance policy and turn it into a genuine solidarity investment policy. France's partnership and international solidarity policy is part of the drive to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. To reach these goals, I have decided that our new policy will benefit from increased resources, after a long period of shrinkage, reaching 0.55% of GNI by 2022. Already, to guarantee this growth, the 2019 budget will include a billion euros of additional commitment authorizations.

But, as I told you one year ago, financial means alone are not enough. A new method is needed, both in France and in our partner countries. New governance has been established with the creation of a National Council for Development. On Friday, the Prime Minister received the report he asked National Assembly Deputy Hervé Berville to draft and I would like to thank Mr Berville for his work and the broad consultation he conducted. As he proposed, a new partnership dimension will be created to better involve civil society, young people, companies and diasporas.

This means working more closely with people in the field. In this connection, I support the proposal to step up the means directly available to our embassies to encourage local initiatives. With regard to gender equality and support for innovation, you need to be the leading actors and the leading communicators of the political will that I have expressed. I also support the idea of a new framework and planning bill to enshrine our assistance budget trajectory and renew the framework of our international cooperation policy.

An ambitious evaluation policy will be implemented to track the results of this assistance transparently and there will be extensive restructuring around the Agence Française du Développement (AFD). I also ask you to pay special attention around the world to ensuring that the coherence and synergy between our national priorities and European cooperation and development projects. I believe that this is a guarantee of coherence and effectiveness for all of us.

I would like to end with the fourth point developed last year, which is clearly even more relevant today: our European priority. Throughout my speech, I have reiterated the importance of Europe, be it in terms of our security, our ability to overhaul the international order or to promote our own interests. Attempts to do so alone are most often much less effective, if not bound to fail. Acting with a strong, coherent European voice, will, to my mind, guarantee our success. Since our last meeting a year ago, we have proposed, we have taken forward and we have built alliances. During my speech at Sorbonne University last September, I set out a comprehensive, ambitious vision for a more sovereign, more united, more democratic Europe. On this path, we have obtained the first results regarding defence – I talked about them earlier – regarding posted workers, regarding social and fiscal convergence, and regarding trade policy. In the coming months, we will continue working on migration and digital technology.

On this basis and given the political context our leading partner, Germany, has had to face, we conducted work over several months that enabled us to reach a historic milestone for France and Germany in Meseberg last June and to produce a strategic document that, regarding all of these points, including the budget and the eurozone, sets out a common agenda until 2021. It will help us develop this vision of a sovereign, united and inclusive Europe that we should have in a coherent manner.

Culture and education, health and food, and digital technology and innovation are all areas in which we have made progress and proposed common initiatives. We have thus adopted an ambitious method, which is to speak to everyone, once again in Europe. In one year, I have visited more than half of the countries in the European Union. I have of course spoken with all of the Heads of State and Government bilaterally. I wished to mark my first summer with a tour of Central and Eastern Europe and I will be in Denmark tomorrow, where there has not been a state visit for 36 years, and then in Finland.

We have sometimes forgotten some countries in Europe with the excuse that we see them at every European Council meeting. But we also have to convince, to understand the deep-rooted dynamic of many European peoples, and to build a strong bilateral relationship that serves our European policy. Europe is not made in

Brussels, Paris or Berlin: it is built in the relentless dissemination of our ideas and our projects without hegemony.

I am telling you this today solemnly and with humility: this European combat has only just begun. It will be long and difficult. It will be central to France's action throughout my term in office and particularly in the coming year, because we are experiencing a European crisis.

Throughout Europe, there are doubts. Brexit is a symptom of this. The rise of extremism has almost become the rule and France the exception. The divisions between North and South in economic terms and between East and West regarding migration issues too often divide our European Union and we are currently experiencing a political crisis about migration that we must address.

So faced with this, how do we respond? By giving up none of the ambition expressed a year ago. None. On the contrary, by bringing greater clarity and a few perspectives I want to share with you here, to conclude my remarks. Firstly, what Europe are we talking about? When we talk to Africa, when we talk about ourselves, when we talk about all these major challenges, the perimeter, the outline of this Europe must not be subject to a form of intellectual laziness. The European Union is not set in stone and changes to its perimeter are neither the end of the world nor a process we should necessarily endure. There is quite obviously Brexit, first of all, but I draw everyone's attention to this: is there not something absurd in a European Union which is today going to devote a huge amount of energy to discussing Brexit and, at the same time, talks of starting accession negotiations with Albania or any other Western Balkans country? All these countries are linked in some way to our history and our strategy, but can we, in this group of informed, clear-sighted people, be satisfied with the way things are going? Do we think this is the best way of responding to our challenges? Do we think things are going as they should when it comes to Europe's perimeter and the kind of Europe we want? Definitely not.

So as far as Brexit is concerned, I would like the agreement to be reached by the end of the year, setting out the framework of our future relations. Yet, I repeat, Brexit is a sovereign choice which must be respected, but it is a choice which cannot be made at the expense of the European Union's integrity. It is what the British people have chosen for themselves, not for others, and France would like to maintain a strong, special relationship with London, but not at the cost of the European Union breaking up. And for integrity to be defended by the capital city which champions it, in its own country, is one thing, but we have to defend the integrity of our values, of our foundations and of the European Union. And so we shall have a rigorous, essential dialogue about this, but in any event we shall have to think about the European Union's post-Brexit relationship with London – that is essential. And thinking about it will involve, precisely, defining at the very least what kind of strategic partnership to build.

I want the same requirement at our borders; I already mentioned Russia earlier, and the framework of a European security and defence architecture; but we cannot build Europe on a long-term basis without thinking about our relation to Russia and Turkey. Thinking about it uncompromisingly and without being naïve. Do we think today – again, clear-sightedly and sincerely – that we can continue negotiating Turkey's accession to the European Union when the plan reaffirmed daily by the Turkish President – for a little over a year I have had an unprecedented number of contacts with him – is a pan-Islamic plan regularly presented as anti-European, whose routine measures rather contradict our principles? Definitely not. And here too we must end hypocrisy and create, I believe, a more effective, more coherent solution for ourselves. So we have to build a partnership that is not accession to the European Union but a strategic partnership with Russia and with Turkey, because they are two powers which are important for our collective security, because they must be anchored to Europe, because the history of those peoples has been built with Europe and together we must build our future. And so on all these fronts we need to reinvent our relationship, rigorously, but without giving in to the kind of tentative bureaucratic steps we are used to on these issues.

The Cold War is behind us and President Erdoğan's Turkey isn't the same as President Kemal's. These are two facts, and we must take on board all their consequences.

We also have to accept, support the fact that this Europe will be a Europe of several circles, because it already is and so we have to accept there is a broad Europe, perhaps broader than the European Union, the Council of Europe forming, moreover, this broader base, founded on our principles, which are at times undermined even within the EU. But there's room therefore for a broad Europe, room for a common market and, at the heart of this, room for enhanced cooperation and greater integration. And this involves being somewhat bold and agreeing to revisit taboo subjects on both sides, the taboo of financial transfers on one side of the Rhine, and treaty change on the other. And on this point, the vision France is promoting today, which we shall be promoting in the framework of future meetings, requires a revision of the treaties, such as the reform of the European Union and the eurozone. I am calling for this and I would like us to be able to carry it out on the basis of the Citizens' Consultations under way, on the basis of the results of the upcoming European elections and of intergovernmental work which will be necessary in the coming semesters. Because we need to rethink how we

intergovernmental work which will be necessary in the coming semesters. Because we need to rethink how we are organized collectively, we need a more effective, smaller Commission and we need to rethink Europe's central strategic objectives.

Finally, we will be, and are being today, collectively tested because this Europe – as I have said several times and I have just been talking about its perimeter, its scope – has to confront all the present-day challenges I've been talking to you about just now. And we have only one credible European response: that of our strategic autonomy. The question isn't whether we manage to persuade the United States of America – a great people, and a great country; the question is whether the United States of America regards us as a power with strategic autonomy – that is the real question raised for Europe today. We are forced to accept that this is not the case today; we must take a clear-sighted, even ruthless look at ourselves; I do not honestly think today that China or the United States think Europe is a power with strategic autonomy comparable to their own. I do not believe it.

And I think that if we do not manage to build this, we are in for some gloomy times ahead. And so how do we build this genuine European sovereignty? Well, by responding to the challenges I have just been talking about, by making Europe the model of this far-reaching, humanist reform of globalization. That is our challenge and it is precisely the matter under debate for the European people ahead of the forthcoming elections.

There's a clear choice on one side: Europe is not effective, it no longer addresses the challenges of globalization. This is not totally false. It does not have strategic autonomy, so we must break it up.

Now the most sophisticated people will tell you: we are in favour of breaking it up except when it provides us with something, because Italy is against the Europe that does not show solidarity on migration, but it is in favour of the Europe of structural funds, when I listen to some ministers; the Italian Prime Minister is also well aware of this, he takes a much more structured approach. The Hungary of Viktor Orbán has never been against the Europe of structural funds, of the Common Agricultural Policy, but it is against Europe when it wants to make great speeches about Christianity. And so there is a clear path of European opportunism, but of openly-expressed nationalism: let's break up this bureaucratic structure, it no longer provides us with anything, let's pretend to forget what it gives us and let's take a clear line.

On the other side, we must take an approach – also clear – geared to a desire for European sovereignty: in what respect and how can Europe alone respond to many of our challenges? And I believe this is the case, and I believe it is especially the case with regard to the political crisis gripping Europe today. I speak of a political crisis because the migration issues we talked about all through the summer are, above all, a political crisis. In 2015, Europe had to endure a genuine migration crisis, when millions of Afghans and Syrians arrived due to conflicts. A little more than a year ago Europe had to endure a genuine migration crisis coming from Libya, but the flows have been reduced ten-fold in recent weeks; it is not a migration crisis, it is a political crisis, that of the very ability to tackle this challenge.

On this issue, we must look at things head-on: why are we having this European and in particular Italian political crisis? Because there has been no European solidarity. Why did we have a political crisis in Greece in the past? Because there was no European solidarity. This is why I have always linked European solidarity with a genuine policy of sovereignty, and so we created politically what is happening in Italy through our lack of solidarity. Does this excuse xenophobic discourse and easy answers? I do not think so, and I also believe that those same xenophobes provide no solution to the ills they complain about. Because it is all very well for them to go seek solidarity from those they want to separate from: it does not often work, and furthermore, all those who put forward nationalist or unilateral discourse very much agree about criticizing Europe but rarely agree about finding common solutions, including for themselves. The ideas we are told about provide no solutions – none.

And so on this issue, I believe that France, with constructive partners and the European Commission, must establish, help establish a long-term mechanism that respects humanitarian principles and effective law-ensuring solidarity, which means we must not and cannot abandon the right of asylum as we conceived it. Every day I hear speeches saying "don't take people in, don't accept them, goodwill is weakness". France, and I welcome this, is one of the countries which, during this summer's political crisis, has taken in the most refugees: 250. I ask you to remember the proportion of these figures, because on the basis of the five missions of the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA) we organized, we identified these people as eligible for asylum. But what fundamentally responsible, clear-sighted political leader can explain to us that we should give up respect for the right of asylum in France and Europe? This right of asylum is in our constitution – ours, the French – and it is in all our European legislation. The key is simply to accept this differentiation. There are people who are eligible for asylum whom we must welcome unconditionally, in a well-organized way, together with the other shore of the Mediterranean and the rest of Africa. And then there is a migration policy to build at the European level with Africa in order to prevent, reduce and control migration flows linked to economic migration and organize the much more effective return of the latter migrants.

This is the very purpose of the law which will be promulgated in a few days' time and which we brought in for France; it is the very purpose of the action we are promoting in Europe and of the partnership we want to build

with all African States, as we began to do in Abidjan at the end of last year, in the dialogue between the European Union and the African Union in Paris a year ago to the day, with the African Union and many countries of origin and transit, and with many of our partners. This is the right response to the migration crisis.

So it is a stringent European policy which respects our values but which, because we will have found common rules for border protection and internal solidarity, will ultimately be effective. France has a migration challenge: last year we were the country that received practically the most applications, the second country for asylum applications, a little over 100,000, but none arrived by so-called primary routes. It is because of Europe's inability to handle the migration issue that we have had so many asylum applications. And so I ask all those who make speeches on this issue to look at the reality of the facts. If we have more effective organization at the European level, then we have part of a response to our own challenges and sometimes our own fears.

We must build it sustainably, rigorously, with all the partners concerned. But more broadly, as you have understood, on each of these issues I shall argue for Europe being the power which, as I have just said, on migration, will build the solutions in which we believe in the globalized world. An economic and trading power through a stronger eurozone, the defence of our strategic and commercial interests, financial independence through mechanisms we must propose, and this is the request we made to the Commission, to consolidate Europe's financial autonomy and finally end the extraterritorial nature of some financial and monetary decisions.

An economic and trading power that will build tax and social convergence within itself. I want a Europe that is a digital power and an artificial intelligence power, through the initiatives we have begun to take, with a fund for disruptive innovation, a genuine digital single market and the fair taxation of digital players. A Europe that is an ecological, food and health power, enabling us to guarantee throughout Europe the same rights of access to healthy food and a healthier environment.

We are promoting this vision; it is impossible to pursue it alone among other European players which do not follow it. It is at European level that we must pursue it and that we shall fight, to the end, the battle to end glyphosate – which France began, I remind you, and without France glyphosate would have been granted a further 15 years throughout Europe – but also for a single carbon price, for genuine energy sovereignty and for a genuine strategy on renewables.

I believe in this vision of a Europe where, at our time of choices, there is an opportunity for progressive humanism; in Europe, I believe there is an opportunity for a pathway enabling us to clearly show our citizens that, on many issues that worry them, Europe is not simply part of the answer but central to our strategic autonomy, central to the response we can provide to our peoples and vis-à-vis our partners.

We must write and tell the history of the Europe we want, demonstrate its concrete results, in order to persuade our fellow citizens that the path of cooperation in Europe and the world is the only one that can lead to relations of mutual trust in France's interest.

Mesdames and Messieurs Ambassadors, I have set out to you our priorities for the coming year, based on those four pillars I defined last year. You will be implementing them under the leadership of the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Jean-Yves Le Drian, whom I thank again for the tireless work he is doing in Paris and around the world, effectively supported by Nathalie Loiseau and Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne and all the staff of the Quai d'Orsay, at the service of our country. I would like to express to them here, express to you all my gratitude for your dedication, skills, intelligence, commitment and courage.

On each of the challenges I have just described, the battle has not been won, and France sometimes appears to be a lone voice – at any rate, that is what some people complain about or seek to scoff at. I do not think it is a lone voice, I think it is listened out for, I think it is sought after and I think it is true to our history; I think it must also break with habits or reflexes and search everywhere for this stringency required of us.

Forty years ago almost to the day, Solzhenitsyn delivered a very great speech at Harvard which people subsequently called "The decline of courage", and he was already saying more or less everything I have just described, about the fragility of the Western world, which he had nevertheless discovered and which was perceived as the land of all promises. And what we must underline today is this decline of courage.

And so in order to face up to this, our role everywhere – and this is what I expect of you – is to be a mediating power, a diplomatic, military, cultural, educational, national and European power, and always to be a mediator; a mediator, meaning that France never stops making itself heard, but that it always seeks to build alliances on this basis; that it is not a compromising power, not a middling power, that it is a mediating power, one which seeks to build this very international order which alone – I very strongly believe – will enable us to make our globalization a little more human and humanist.

I know I can rely on you, because your daily commitment to our country is the DNA of your profession and your

source of pride. I thank you.