

INTERVENTION ENREGISTREE, CONFERENCE ANNUELLE  
DE « LEADERS POUR LA PAIX » (11 mai 2021)

Mr President, dear Jean-Pierre Raffarin,

Madam Director-General,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be speaking at the annual “Leaders for Peace” conference. I remember our discussions, a few years ago now. You have invited me to share my thoughts on multilateralism and peace in 2021. This subject is particularly topical this year, marked both by the prospect of an end to the epidemic – meaning we must conceive the “world of after” – and the return of the influence of the United States in multilateral forums, which is an encouragement to rediscover the path of effective multilateralism, suited to the power relations of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Your 2019 report on the subject clearly set out the picture of an undermined, challenged and weakened multilateral order. Ultimately, we have three questions to address on this point:

Firstly, should we seek to return to the “world of before”, going into reverse, if you will? Or should we choose to start the transition, by nature more uncertain, perhaps more dangerous, to a new multilateralism, redesigned for these new power relations and the lessons learned from the crisis?

Some seem to think that the current crisis is merely an interlude, that the vaccine will take things back to how they were. That is, I believe, a historical mistake. I deeply believe we are at the end of a cycle. We now know how much our growth trajectories at the turn of the millennium were a dead end: they generated highly inflammable inequalities within our very societies, while consuming the planet’s natural capital and, in a way, they exacerbated pre-existing geopolitical tensions. From California to the Sahel and to the Pacific, all of us are now suffering the consequences, and these consequences

are particularly damaging for the most vulnerable States and the most fragile societies, for the countries that are already the poorest.

We therefore need to conceive and shape the next cycle. Our response, in France, and collectively in Europe, means seizing the opportunity of this last warning shot to determinedly shift our development trajectory. I am convinced that what we have long called the “Washington Consensus” is now dead and buried. On 11 November last year, we sought to bring about a “Paris Consensus”, a new universal consensus, at the Paris Peace Forum, to bring a transition towards new economic, social and democratic models. We need to continue shaping and consolidating this consensus, and your thoughts on the subject will help us progress.

The second major question is, in my eyes, what we are to do with “commons” such as the climate, health, biodiversity and the Internet. At the end of the last century, we defined a shared agenda and conceived these common goods of humankind. Of course, the achievements were tentative, often uncertain; our awareness was only a few years old. I particularly have in mind the fight against terrorism and against hate content online and on social media. But these common goods are a now an essential aspect of the new multilateralism. Should we preserve them for the benefit of all, or resign ourselves to seeing them eroded by exploitation, overconsumption and predation?

Since the beginning of the pandemic, I have promoted the vision of the fight against COVID-19 being a “global public good”. This vision, which was not evident, has given rise to the creation of the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A), helping provide the poorest countries with diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines, and to strengthen their health systems for the fight against the pandemic. We can be proud of what has been accomplished, but we know that we must go much further: when it shared, last month, the first vaccine doses with Africa to vaccinate healthcare workers, France sparked

what I am absolutely convinced will be a vast movement of solidarity in the fight against COVID-19. I have called on my G7 partners to join it as soon as possible. And we know what we have to do, at the G7 and the G20: a profound public health response to learn all the lessons of the crisis and overcome this pandemic, which can only be achieved if we fight this battle cooperatively and universally.

Beyond this short-term response, where confidence in multilateralism is at stake, we need to reform the international health architecture to strengthen our collective security in the face of pandemics. Success will depend on our ability to bring “public health peace” – meaning to preserve international health cooperation from rising geopolitical rivalries. And that is possible. Some 40 years ago, at the height of the Cold War, humankind overcame smallpox thanks to cooperation between scientists and doctors from around the world, including Russians, Chinese and Americans. It is this public health agenda that we must address today.

The same goes for the environment: if the fight against climate change or against the collapse of biodiversity were to become hostages to rising rivalries between great powers, we would be certain to be building our own dead ends, our own failures for today and for tomorrow. The path ahead is narrow and perilous, because we failed to act earlier, it must be said. But there is cause to be reasonably optimistic: with our European, African and also Chinese partners, we preserved climate multilateralism and the Paris Agreement for four years, despite the exit of the United States that could have caused its collapse. The coalitions of actors formed at the One Planet summits, bringing together national and local governments, companies, philanthropic foundations and civil society organizations have enabled us to make progress in overhauling our economies, bringing tangible results.

Joe Biden’s climate summit last month, attended by all the G20 leaders, showed that preserving the environment can be a shared fight, and above all marked the return of the United States of America and their catching-up. It is now urgent to speed up the transition and

increase the level of ambition: COP26 in Glasgow in November must, if you will, be the Bretton Woods of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, defining the organization of productive systems in the “world of after” with our new gold standard: climate neutrality.

The European Union is a leader on this subject. We have made the strongest, most radical commitments, we have brought in profound innovations, and the French EU Presidency will commit to it fully, with the carbon border adjustment mechanism. We have nothing to blush about. On the contrary, we need to continue driving international climate and biodiversity geopolitics, and engaging with China and the United States of America.

Lastly, cyber space is also a common good, which should facilitate communication between individuals, cultures, peoples and nations. It needs to be accessible to all and governed by the principles of democratic sovereignty. That means it must be governed and regulated, not captured, pirated and instrumentalized. The time has come to set down together the fundamental principles of the global information and communication space in order to preserve a single, open and trusted Internet. At the G7 and G20, I will submit tangible proposals to ensure “digital public order”. And here too, we have done a lot in this area since my election in 2017. In summer 2017, firstly, with Theresa May, to fight terrorism online. Then with the Christchurch Call to Action, here in Paris in May 2019, which brought tangible results. And a few weeks ago, progress was made in Europe, adopted in parliament, and more will be achieved at the summit on 14 and 15 May.

Thirdly, this agenda to protect global public goods is essential for peace, but there is a question of method. In this race against the clock, we cannot wait for perfect unanimity to act. We should never exclude anyone in principle, but the approach must be that that guided us in Europe and now should guide us even further: no Member State can be forced to go further than it can go and wishes to go, but those who do not wish to continue moving forward must not be able to stop

others doing so. If you will, an ambitious avant-garde must always be allowed to act.

Believing in multilateralism does not mean defending the status quo. Nor does it mean waiting for unanimity before moving forward. It means taking action to implement the principles that are the foundations of the multilateral order. It means working on the reform and modernization of international organizations to make them more effective in bringing tangible results for citizens, and especially the most vulnerable. It means promoting innovative initiatives in sectors where international governance remains insufficient, such as digital technology. It means involving civil society partners in seeking solutions. Really, I would like to replace the “multilateralism of words” by the “multilateralism of actions”. I am deeply convinced of this method. And that means we must allow their ambitious avant-garde action, and re-synchronize our agendas, ensure they are coherent. This ambitious avant-garde action is possible on the climate and on social issues, but will not stand up if we continue with a trade agenda that ignores social and environmental dimensions. How can we ask the Europeans to move forward on climate ambition, when the next day they are to conclude trade agreements with regions that do not? Multilateralism must also be the child of coherence, if it is to be accepted by our peoples. And so trade, the economy, finance and social and environmental issues must go hand in hand in the re-synchronization of our agendas, with renewed coherence.

Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, like all major crises, that caused by the COVID-19 pandemic brings an opportunity. It requires us to update the very logic of international collective action, in all fields where it is required to address global challenges. That will be the focus of the work at this year’s Paris Peace Forum, which will hold its fourth session in November. It has been designed as a laboratory to bring innovative, tangible solutions concerning the major subjects of global governance. At the forum, I will be pleased to see all those open to what you call “planetization”, my dear Jean-Pierre Raffarin,

giving priority to the protection of the planet, which is an essential condition for preserving global peace.

So I would like to thank you for your work, your efforts, and I look forward to seeing you again in person and being able to welcome you to the Élysée. Thank you.