

Manuel Valls appointed France's new Prime Minister

Presidency of the Republic – Speech by M. François Hollande, President of the Republic

Paris, 31 March 2014

My dear compatriots,

I'm speaking to you this evening because this is an important moment in our national life.

In the latest local elections, by voting or abstaining, you expressed your unhappiness and your disappointment.

I've heard your message; it's clear.

Not enough changes and therefore too little speed.

Not enough jobs and therefore too much unemployment.

Not enough social justice and too many taxes.

Not enough effectiveness in government action and therefore too many questions about our country's ability to cope, when it has so many strengths.

I'm also fully aware of the suffering of many of you in making ends meet, providing for your children's education and finding a home. I know some French people feel forgotten and abandoned, if not sidelined.

This message is directed at me personally. I must respond to it. With sincerity. With the deep conviction I've forged in the past 22 months, as French President.

I hereby confirm to you that the recovery of our country is essential. Of our production system. Of our public accounts. Of our influence in Europe and the world.

So I decided this as soon as I took office as Head of State, and without this national effort, France would have continued lagging behind.

The government of Jean-Marc Ayrault has devoted itself bravely and selflessly to this difficult task. It has succeeded in getting the greatly deteriorated situation we inherited back to normal. It has embarked on reforms that will do credit to those who proposed and voted for them. I want to express my gratitude to it.

Today it's time to begin a new chapter.

So I've entrusted Manuel Valls with the mission of leading the French government.

It will be a tight-knit, coherent, united team. A fighting government with three goals.

Firstly, to restore strength to our economy. That's essential! It's companies that create jobs, and we must do everything to ensure they achieve this, because the main injustice is unemployment. That's the purpose of the Responsibility Pact: lower taxes on companies, particularly on low salaries, and, in exchange, more recruitment and more

investment. It's a confidence-building measure for all the economic players and the employers and unions. That's the challenge. It's decisive for our country's future. To produce more and better; to produce in France.

To produce differently, too. That's the challenge of the energy transition – to prepare tomorrow's France, to be less dependent on both oil and "all-nuclear". To take a lead on the green industries.

Finally, social justice.

The Responsibility Pact must be complemented by a Solidarity Pact with, as its first pillar, education and youth training; as its second, welfare, with priority being given to health; and as its third, spending power, with a reduction in taxes on French people and in contributions paid by employees.

In order to achieve this, the government will have to implement the programme of budgetary savings I've announced.

It's not about saving money for the sake of it. There can be no question of weakening growth, which is picking up. We have to transform our state. We have to reform the organization of our territories. We have to protect our social model. In a nutshell, be fairer and more efficient.

The government will also have to convince Europe that this contribution by France to competitiveness and growth must be taken into account, with due regard for its commitments, because strengthening the French economy is the best way to reorient Europe.

Finally, I want to finish with a conciliatory, rallying message. France is suffering from its divisions. It is undergoing a civic, even moral crisis. Its institutions, including its judicial system, are being challenged. It is wasting its energy on pointless squabbles. It is cultivating fear, which extremists are using to fuel hatred and rejection. The Republic is our common good. I won't let any of its values be damaged, wherever in the country this may be. No form of exclusion or stigmatization will be tolerated, any more than communautarisme [the splitting of society into communities].

The best way of bringing the French and their representatives together is, more than ever, through dialogue and respect. This is my way.

I am, and will remain, true to my commitments. I'm not forgetting who had faith in me, who elected me, or why.

The choices I've made over the past two years have been tough, given the seriousness of the situation I was left with. I knew this, and I take complete responsibility for it. But my duty is to look beyond the immediate results and focus my action on the destiny of a great country like ours. This means making bold choices and sticking to the course.

Because I have only one objective: the success of France and the French.

This is my task; I won't shirk from taking it on.

Long live the Republic!

Long live France!./.