

G7 Dinard – Saint-Malo – Foreign Ministers Meeting

Plenary Meeting – Introductory Remarks by M. Jean-Yves Le Drian, Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs

I am particularly pleased to welcome you here today and tomorrow in Dinard and Saint-Malo for the G7 Foreign Ministers Meeting.

I would like to begin by thanking the local elected officials and people of Dinard and Saint-Malo who have opened their doors to us. We were keen for the preparatory meetings to be held in France's regions. And I wanted to seize this opportunity to show you my beautiful region, where history meets innovation, and which faces the sea both by vocation and by choice. This is a region open to the world. And there is a saying here that "a wet wedding is a happy marriage" and so, if you will, I say "a wet G7 is a happy G7."

Over these two days, we will prepare the summit of our Heads of State and Government, which will be held in Biarritz in August. France's President has decided to dedicate it to reducing inequality.

The programme I have proposed for today's meeting – Fighting Inequality, Reducing Threats, Strengthening Democracy – fully addresses that imperative and will be the underlying theme of our five working meetings.

We are going to discuss common responses to global security challenges, particularly terrorism and trafficking. We will address the issue of the major regional crises that undermine societies and hurt the most vulnerable.

In accordance with the priority accorded by the French President to the partnership with Africa, we will study means of enhancing the mobilization of the international community to support African peace operations and to combat trafficking in the Sahel region. Reducing inequality between men and women

will also be central to discussions, on such topics as protecting women from sexual violence in conflicts and strengthening the role of women in peace processes and crisis resolution. We will do so by opening up our discussions to leading figures committed to these causes.

And, in response to new threats, we will address how to bolster democracies in response to the consequences of the digital revolution and the development of practices of interference. For democracy has to be able to curb obstructions to the liberty of the press and to effectively regulate manipulation of information, while respecting the principles of freedom of expression. Similarly, States need to behave responsibly in cyber space. These are new issues that we need to tackle concertedly and coherently.

The G7 is a key forum for discussion and reflection that we need to put to use in order to respond to the concerns of our citizens and to foster global peace and security. That is why I would like us to produce concrete initiatives today and tomorrow, centred on these common challenges.

Thank you.