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PREMIER MINISTRE

Commissariat général à la stratégie et à la prospective



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Let the discussions begin

Following the governmental seminar held on August 19, the *Commissariat général à la stratégie et à la prospective* (CGSP) was given responsibility to prepare, before year-end, a national strategy for the next ten years. The President of the French Republic directed us to prepare a meticulous diagnosis of the prospects for the French economy and society, and the choices that confront the nation as a whole. He asked us to propose major objectives, associated with quantitative indicators that enable assessments of the ongoing progress. But, above all, he requested that the development of this project, critical to France's future, incorporate consultations and discussions with experts, social partners, elected officials and citizens.

The Prime Minister specifically assigned us to work on five topics important for the medium term perspective: the future of the production model; the reform of the social model; the sustainability of the growth and funding model; how changes in society will impact the French Repu-

blican model; and the European project. Echoing the President, he reminded us that this is not a theoretical exercise and required us to subject our ideas to discussion.

By publishing an introductory note for the national debate on each of these five themes, the CGSP is extending the dialogue initiated by the seminar of 19 August, launching a thorough debate on a series of issues fundamental to the future of this country. These documents do not intend to provide answers, but to raise questions. Each one provides findings, formulates a prospective diagnosis and lays out possible choices. They are not a culmination, but a starting point: working papers whose aim is to provide a solid foundation for the discussions that follow. Those discussions will certainly serve to complement and clarify the analyses, better characterise the challenges and risks, and narrow the choices. Accomplishing this will be the proof that these notes have achieved their objective.



These documents are not exhaustive. They do not include the international diagnosis presented in the introduction to the governmental seminar from 19 August. Crucial issues such as the level of public spending, conditions for a return to full employment, trends in income distribution, ageing, and inequalities among regions are only addressed in a cursory or indirect manner. These are only some of the subjects that will certainly arise in the discussions that follow. They will be handled in the final report that the CGSP will submit at year-end.

We hope for a wide-ranging, rigorous debate.

- **Wide-ranging**, because the subject – France Ten Years from Now – concerns every citizen, each with his own point of view on the subject. We will not limit ourselves to exchanges between experts and we will seek out those whose voices are often not heard.
- **Rigorous**, because the question deserves high-quality dialogue, bolstered by facts and argumentation, and transcending the usual positioning and divisions. In France, what is ostensibly a debate too often finishes as polemics. We give unqualified support to the former, and will not sanction the latter.

To be informative, this debate will take various forms. Over the next six weeks, we will do our utmost to corroborate our diagnoses and test the relevance of our questions. We will hear from experts and citizens.

We will organise discussions with elected officials and social partners. We will debate with think tanks and associations from civil society. We will hold meetings in Paris and around France. We will open a discussion forum on the web. We will seek reviews from our international partners.

Clearly, this reflection on the future will not ignore present-day issues. Studying priorities with a ten-year horizon does not mean losing sight of current preoccupations. We must simultaneously focus on today's priorities and those of tomorrow. We must also allow ourselves to deal comprehensively with problems rather than seeking temporary solutions. We must ensure stability in our public policy which is indispensable for lasting results.

At year-end, we will submit a report to the government summarising all the lessons learned from these exchanges. However, beyond our own mission, we hope to contribute to the initiation, within civil society, of a wider and more enduring debate regarding the challenges in France's future.

I would like to thank all the teams at the CGSP, who geared up to produce these five documents in a very short time. Often, the authors of these notes would have preferred more leeway to prepare their analysis before submitting it for discussion. However, the overriding imperative was to launch the debate on time.

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