



General presentation of group reports prior to the public debate

Launched on May 21st 2007 by the president of the republic, the first phase of the environment Grenelle ended today with the submission of the reports of the 6 work groups. Also submitted were the conclusions of the 2 intergroups (on genetically modified organisms and waste), contained in 2 specific reports. Almost 330 participants contributed to the exercise. 40 plenary meetings, supplemented by 13 workshops and numerous auditions have been organised since the beginning of July. The reports reflect the tone of those meetings as closely as possible. The work carried out calls us to make some general remarks at this point which, as well as the general context, concern the shared and divergent opinions revealed by the process and undertakings that are starting to be better outlined.

As we reach the end of this first phase, the first success of the Grenelle is that it took place. Nobody would have bet that it was possible to talk of such diverse and symbolic projects as energy, GMOs, incinerators, phytosanitary products and motorways between companies, trade unions, associations, local politicians and state departments in a meaningful yet courteous way, with a view to understanding the positions of each party and leading not to the creation of anathemas or slogans but beliefs and ambitions. The discussion was in-depth and intense, with the only regret expressed being that it was so short. Another clear desire was that the debate should continue and should lead to action.

Whilst huge chunks of the debate are now the subject of a common approach to observations, objectives or resources, it was never the idea to drown the most thorny subjects in a vague consensus on principles that were so general that they would be meaningless. This is obvious from reading the proposals in these reports. The objective was not to establish superficial unanimity nor to hide the real difficulties that lie underneath, but to look together to identify a blueprint for collective action, mobilising each and every participant on shared objectives, accepted methods or objectives which people believe to be crucial. No-one has compromised, or will

compromise his values, the demands of his or her mandate or function: everyone has sought to define a common area where they could work together.

Two fundamental observations came out of this:

The first concerns the risks attached to the degradation of our planet: today, nobody disputes the existence of climate change, but only the scale of it. Its minimum consequences however are recognised: unless something is done, the disorder caused by global warming will completely turn our lives upside down and, more particularly, the lives of the least privileged; it would irremediably compromise our potential for growth and, as a result, our future; in the same way, the destruction of biodiversity – understood as the capacity of the environment to enable species of all types to coexist in dynamic equilibrium – is reaching thresholds beyond which biodiversity would spiral out of control: not just one species or another disappearing, but the capacity of the environment to be inhabited by them, ours included. Finally, on the back of some recurrent crises, we have been able to measure the risks to which the proteiform pollution of our environment would expose our health, the capacity of nature and its essential resources – starting with water and air – to support such attacks would be reduced.

The second shared observation concerns the urgency of the situation. Acting quickly has become crucial. A few more years of degradation would have an exponential effect on the resulting damage, and whilst the worst case scenario cannot be certain, it's possible that what will actually happen may be worse than that worse case scenario. One example is the speed of the extinction of species and the melting of the ice caps. On the other hand, a few months of resolute action would have very little immediate perceptible effect, meaning that we need radical action in order to start to overcome the difficulties. As a result, the success horizon can be counted in decades, or even half centuries: it took 20 years of CFC gases to make a hole in the ozone layer, but it will take 50 more years, after 20 years of absolute prohibition, to restore it.

The shared belief of the participants is that action is possible, that solutions do exist and that what these observations will force us into doing is not close in on ourselves, but mobilise French society in a search for new frontiers.

What is currently being debated at the initiative of each of these groups is therefore a very broad raft of proposals: their scope reflects the stage at which the debate stands at this point.

We will see that there are areas in which consensus has been firm and comprehensive: knowledge is complete, or near complete, the challenges identified, the forms of action known and accepted, the assessment data and time horizon agreed upon. Thus, we know that the most toxic pesticides cannot be used and

therefore they must rapidly be banned and that, beyond that, we will need to undertake an ambitious reduction plan in favour of ecological and productive agriculture, which in turn, means finding alternative solutions. We also understand the benefits that our country would derive from developing organic agriculture but we also see the efforts that would be needed by the industry in order to get it off the ground. We know that the competitiveness of mass transport must be restored in order to reduce the share of road transport in travel, and that means rethinking our overall transport policy: organisation of rail freight, development of dedicated transport systems, review of the ways in which we examine and prioritise our infrastructure projects.

We know that making waste water and sanitation systems compliant is absolutely necessary, and that a 5-year plan must be introduced to make up for the cumulative backlog, and that restoring water quality will cost at least that; we know that it is possible to reduce water consumption where the resource is currently poorly used. We know that the main forms of energy wastage are in old buildings, that today we need to launch an ambitious renovation plan and implement insulation techniques and higher performance energy consumption techniques. Finally, we know that none of this would be possible without an ecological supply which meets the ecological demand thus created: hence the importance of initiatives of companies, the globalisation of industries, training, the capacity for innovation, and so forth.

On other points, the clarity of the objectives does not reduce the complexity of the problem, which means that new operations will have to be introduced with care, that the scientists are properly mobilised and that impact studies are assessed and discussed. Modifying the price signal in an economic chain, banking on changes in social behaviour, but also protecting areas that other objectives of similar value would have us exploit in a measured way, sharing land by respecting its vocation without harming development: so many cases in which complexity and conflict should not be underestimated, and where certainties cannot be a pretext for inaction, but invite humility, critical analysis, focus and tenacity too.

Elsewhere, feelings diverge: on risks or on consequences, or even on the way of compensating for or replacing such a way of doing things or consuming things with another. But people agree on the importance of the issue, the need to do something, and the need for research, development and assessment on new technologies, on the impacts of a new tax, on the best way of replacing a fertilizer, for example. Projects will have to be opened and discussions led with clear objectives, experimentation and research programmes launched, a public debate conducted with a view to coming to conclusions. We will find agreement on method, principles and objectives and the search for new facts allowing us to make reasoned, joint decisions in highly sensitive areas such as GMOs, biofuels and incinerators. This observation must not, under any circumstances, paralyse public action but, on the contrary, guide it.

Certain points, finally, are subject to conflict, either because they concern deep-seated and antagonistic values or because they are controversial, including how they are measured scientifically, or even because priorities are in conflict and resources limited. Such as applies, for example, in the conflict between different uses of land.

It goes without saying that the State will take its responsibilities, and that much is expected of it – firstly that it should restore the credibility of its words and its actions in areas where it has become feeble or uncertain. This will mean transparency, discussion, trust in the use of compared ideas, facts, expertise and expert analyses and experiments. New governance and a shared understanding of what is at stake is demanded: all this will have to be established. It is also why, at the end of the day, the final discussion on the major thrusts of a policy combining immediate measures and targets, methods and resources must culminate in a clearly-identified political decision-making procedure.

To suggest that it is for the State to choose and act alone would be a comfortable choice but a serious error. The environment which is suffering degradation and damage is *our* environment. We are collectively responsible for it; each of course, to the extent of his abilities, and the State will be guarantor, both of the solidarity of people and areas, and of fair punishment for irresponsible action. However, only the multiplication of actions at every level and through and in companies, in areas and at every moment of day-to-day life and the most structuring life choices can bring about this change.

It is superfluous to say that our action will only be effective if it is followed by our partners. If it is to develop an exemplary action, our country cannot do it alone: this is not desirable in itself and it is not possible for France. The competitiveness of companies confronted with international competition and buying power must not be compromised. It is for this reason that the implementation of the right number of the measures recommended in our reports should be subject to efficient co-ordination with our diplomatic forces at European and international levels. This constraint, which previously seemed insurmountable, is gradually loosening up in favour of a planetary understanding of the problems we face: the time has come to leverage this dynamic movement and be heard by our partners.

We are not going to change society. France will remain a land of freedom which contains its own disputes and contradictions and a wealth of difference. We are going to change the manner in which we develop but abandon none of our ambitions for growth and progress. We will make growth and progress possible for future generations by correcting our behaviour *now* and changing our ways of being, travelling, living, producing, growing and farming. We can only progress down this road if we ensure a parallel mobilisation of our research and innovation capacities within the public and private sectors working for the environment: France must not

be left behind in the race for the patents for tomorrow for carbon capture, electrical vehicles or energy-saving techniques.

The proposals contained within the group reports outline the possible ways forward: they have to be discussed because we can use others, adjust the route taken and suggest other completely, different routes, but we have to start somewhere.

The brevity of the discussions and the urgent need for decisions will not be allowed to stop us looking for the best ways and means of our ambitions for the environment, to talk about them in Europe, to present them to our partners and to share the workload with them or even work in their service.