

Check against delivery

# Saint-Malo Summit

Opening address by Mr Jean-Yves Le Drian,  
President of the Regional Council of Brittany

Wednesday 29 October, AM

The Mayor,  
The Minister,  
The Presidents and Vice-Presidents of Regions and governments,  
The representatives of UN Agencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen of France, Europe and the World,

It is with pride and emotion that Brittany welcomes you to Saint-Malo.

You have come from 60 countries spanning Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe and represent over 150 local authorities including around one hundred regions. You join us in Brittany from the banks of the Ganges, the Andes cordillera and from beyond the Ural Mountains.

Welcome to this Breton town whose children once discovered Canada and sailed the seven seas.

Brittany boasts a tradition of being open to other peoples. For a long time, it was a place of emigration. As it is open to the world, it is also attentive to what goes on in the world.

It was also here, in Saint-Malo, that the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions was founded in 1973. The CPMR now brings together over 150 regions of Europe and North Africa.

Today, we have come together in Saint-Malo to discuss climate change and to demonstrate, by sharing our experiences, that the level of responsibility that we each represent, with our own skills, our budget and operating scope, can be the most relevant or can at least count in the solutions needed.



The striking event of the last few years is the understanding that our entire future is hinged upon a thin film of the atmosphere, only 5 kilometres thick.

...And we only have one world.

No continent will be spared.

The United States felt it in 2005, with the New Orleans floods following Katrina. The world's leading power is helpless in the face of a category-five hurricane.

In May 2008, Nargis caused thousands of deaths in Myanmar. Yet lesser-known extreme episodes now regularly sweep across East Africa and Madagascar, tropical and subtropical Asia.

Island communities are leaving the cradle of their culture and civilisation for good, forced away by rising sea levels.

Spectacular episodes are only the visible surface of a more insidious reality. The historic drought in the Sahel and East Africa is shaking up economic systems and is endangering the African social fabric.

Further north, in the Arctic circle, climate change is already well at work. Permafrost is thawing leaving behind a trail of damage to habitats and forests.

We are now facing new geostrategic challenges.

Europe is not the worst-off but is far from being spared. Constant floods. Unprecedented forest fires in Greece and Portugal. Swells and the erosion of coasts.

Only **yesterday**, scientific cautiousness taught us not to draw definitive conclusions. **Today**, reality is telling us that we cannot put it off any longer.

Facing this, two attitudes are possible: we can resign ourselves to it or take action.

Politicians have been shown their responsibilities and we must consider the world we are leaving our children, now more than ever.

Through the UN's drive, thanks to the precious contribution of the GIEC-IPCC Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change network, the international community has started to act.

The Kyoto Protocol's opening to ratification in 1998 and entry into force in 2005 mark an important step.

The Johannesburg Summit was another decisive step in 2002. Global warming has become a key international debate.

Yet, since then, we cannot help but be impatient.

Greenhouses gases in the earth's atmosphere continue to be emitted at a pace that is difficult to tolerate.

The new industrial powers in Asia and Latin America assert their right to development.

The United States has until now stubbornly refused to join in the collective effort in order to preserve its lifestyle.

Europe seems to be quite alone in its determined support for the Kyoto Protocol, even though the current financial crisis seems to impede the implementation of the climate plan in certain countries.

Africa and island nations, already affected by global warming, are struggling to make their voices heard.

For the IPCC, negotiations between nations seems to fall far below the urgency of a situation that some consider very worrying. Discussions to be held in Poznań in December 2008 and in Copenhagen in 2009 are looking off to a bad start.

Yet the community of nations does not have the choice. It will have to succeed in this revolution and revise its development models.

In this respect, an unprecedented effort is required that must involve all people on earth and all levels of government.

Regional governments cannot stay on the sidelines when it comes to climate change.

Through their **closeness to the population**, they are perfectly aware of the challenges affecting their citizens.

Through their **ability for urban planning**, they are able to come up with ways of occupying and protecting their space to produce less greenhouse gases.

Through their **ability to act on their economic fabrics**, they can foster the emergence of new technologies that are more compatible with protecting our environment.

Through their **ability to train**, they can create the skills that must be pooled for the coming change of civilisation.

Through their **ability to inform**, they must strive to convince, argue and raise awareness of how to combat climate change.

... Regions must be an **operational level** in the fight against the effects of global warming.

For this, a framework of action must be defined that meets a series of guiding principles:

Firstly, **the principle of subsidiarity**, because regional governments are not to replace Nations.

Sound governance means that each level of public decision-making acts where its contribution is the most constructive and the most effective. The theme-based sessions that will be held throughout this Summit will demonstrate the relevance of our region's actions in this field.

They will highlight the **added value** of this level of government, as a driving force close to the people.

Secondly, **the principle of efficiency**, as we all know that the fight against global warming must use a combination of different solutions. The solutions to this global challenge are not only taken from regions, that can highlight technological excellence.

The fight against global warming must also be based on democratic efficiency, on the drive of populations in line with their customs. For this issue, we are not separated into those who know and those who are learning, simply those who discuss. **The best solutions are the ones that are effective.**

Lastly, **the principle of solidarity**, as the poorest populations are also the first to be affected by global warming.

How can the fight against climate change not be seen as a key issue of decentralised cooperation?

To answer the appeal of Southern countries, how can we ignore that a considerable proportion of greenhouse gas emissions are produced by developed countries?

In this respect, we have a historic responsibility. **The fight against climate change and our help to foster development are now closely related.**

More than ever, regional governments must be a **vehicle for cohesion** in a world that is facing unprecedented blows.

Involving the population in public decision-making, inter-regional cooperation, pooling new technologies ... the range of projects to be presented over these two days is set to be remarkable.

These projects are coming to light as the United Nations and Europe are looking to regions to draw from their creativity.

In a world that is now facing an economic crisis coupled with a climate crisis, it will be our responsibility to step up interactions between North and South. We cannot let people down. We must be an intelligent force for cohesion and create a “toolbox” in the interest of all, to meet the challenges facing us.

Thank you.