Macron – coronavirus ADDRESS TO THE FRENCH,

MARCH 12, 2020

Translated from the French transcript on the Elysee website: https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2020/03/12/adresse-aux-francais

French, French, my dear compatriots,

For the past few weeks, our country has been facing the spread of a virus, Covid-19, which has affected several thousand of our compatriots. I have, of course, this evening, before anything else, a touched and warm thought for the families and loved ones of our victims. This epidemic which affects all continents and strikes all European countries is the most serious health crisis that France has experienced in a century. In the overwhelming majority of cases, Covid-19 is safe, but the virus can have very serious consequences, especially for those of our compatriots who are elderly or affected by chronic diseases such as diabetes, obesity or cancer.

For several weeks, we prepared, acted. The staff of hospitals, doctors, nurses, paramedics, agents of the Samu and our hospitals, city doctors, all the staff of the public health service in France are committed with dedication and efficiency. If we were able to delay the spread of the virus and limit severe cases, it is thanks to them because everyone responded. All of them agreed to take time out of their personal and family life for our health. This is why, in your name, I want above all to express this evening the recognition of the Nation to these heroes in white coats, these thousands of admirable women and men who have no other compass than care , other concern than humans, our well-being, our life, quite simply.

I also want to salute your composure this evening. Faced with the spread of the virus, you may have felt for yourselves, for your loved ones, worry or even anxiety, and this is quite legitimate. All of you have been able to cope by not giving in to anger or panic. Better, by adopting the right actions, you have slowed the spread of the virus and thus allowed our hospitals and our caregivers to better prepare.That is what a great Nation is. Women and men capable of placing the collective interest above everything, a human community that stands by values: solidarity, fraternity.

However, my dear compatriots, I want to tell you this tonight with great gravity, lucidity but also the collective will that we adopt the right organization, we are only at the beginning of this epidemic. Across Europe, it is accelerating, it is intensifying. Faced with this, the absolute priority for our Nation will be our health. I will not compromise on anything.

A principle guides us to define our actions, it guides us from the start to anticipate this crisis then to manage it for several weeks and it must continue to do so: it is confidence in science. It is to listen to those who know. The greatest European specialists spoke this morning in an important publication. I gathered today, with the Prime Minister and the Minister of Health, our scientific monitoring committee.We have in France the best virologists, the best epidemiologists, renowned specialists, clinicians too, people who are in the field and whom we have listened to, as we have been doing since the first day. Everyone has told us that despite our efforts to curb it, the virus continues to spread and is accelerating. We knew it, we feared it.

What is likely to happen is that the disease will first affect the most vulnerable people. Many of them will require appropriate hospital care, often respiratory support. This is why, and I will come back to this in a moment, we are taking very strong measures to massively increase our reception capacities at the hospital because the challenge is to continue to treat other diseases as well. It is also to prepare for a possible second wave which will affect a little later, in a much smaller number, younger people, a priori less exposed to the disease, but who will also have to be treated.

In this context, the urgency is to protect our most vulnerable compatriots. The urgency is to curb the epidemic in order to protect our hospitals, our emergency and resuscitation services, our caregivers who will have to treat, as I have just explained to you, more and more affected patients. These are our priorities. That is why we must continue to save time and follow those who are the most fragile.Protect the most vulnerable first. This is the top priority.

That is why I ask tonight all people over the age of 70, those who suffer from chronic illnesses or respiratory disorders, people with disabilities, to stay as much as possible in their homes. They can, of course, leave their homes to do their shopping, to ventilate themselves, but they must limit their contacts to the maximum. In this context, I asked the scientists about our municipal elections, the first round of which will be held in a few days. They consider that there is nothing to prevent the French, even the most vulnerable, from going to the polls. I also asked the Prime Minister, he did so again this morning, to consult widely with all the political families, and they expressed the same will. However, it will be necessary to ensure strict compliance with barrier measures against the virus and health recommendations. I trust the mayors and the good citizenship of each of you. I also know that town halls and state services have organized things well.Reinforced instructions will be given tomorrow so that our elders do not wait long, queues do not form, that distances are also kept and that these famous barrier measures are well respected. But it is important, at this moment, following the advice of scientists as we have just done, to ensure the continuity of our democratic life and our institutions. So, the priority of priorities today is therefore to protect the weakest, those who are affected first by this epidemic.

The second is to curb the epidemic. Why ? The Minister of Health and the Director General of Health have explained this to you on several occasions: to avoid the accumulation of patients who will be in respiratory distress in our emergency and resuscitation services. We must continue to save time, and for that, I will ask you to continue to make sacrifices and rather to do more, but for our collective interest.

As of Monday and until further notice, nurseries, schools, colleges, high schools and universities will be closed for a simple reason: our children and our youngest, according to scientists still, are those who propagate, seems the virus as quickly as possible, even if, for children, they sometimes have no symptoms and, fortunately, do not seem today to suffer from acute forms of the disease. This is both to protect them and to reduce the spread of the virus across our territory.

A daycare service will be set up region by region, we will find the right organizations so that, in effect, the personnel who are essential for the management of the health crisis can have their children looked after and continue to go to work to protect you. and take care of you. This organization will be worked on by the Government in the coming days with all of the elected officials and all those responsible for our territory.

When possible, I ask companies to allow their employees to work remotely. The ministers have already announced it, we have developed telework a lot. We must continue this, intensify it to the maximum. Public transport will be maintained, because to stop it would be to block everything, including the possibility of treatment. But here too, it is your responsibility that I appeal to, and I invite all French people to limit their trips to what is strictly necessary. The government will also announce measures to limit gatherings as much as possible.

At the same time, our health system, particularly in the intensive care unit, must prepare to receive more and more serious cases of Covid-19 and continue to treat other patients. Places must be made available in hospitals. For this, all national hospital capacities as well as the maximum of doctors and carers will be mobilized. We will also mobilize students, young retirees. Exceptional measures will be taken in this direction. Many, moreover, have started. I want to thank them.I saw a few days ago, at the Samu in Paris, a magnificent, moving, exemplary mobilization, where students, a few months away from their competition, were there to answer calls, help, and where doctors who had barely retired had returned to lend a helping hand. This is what we will collectively generalize by taking the right measures. At the same time, non-essential care in the hospital will be postponed, that is, operations that are not urgent, all of which can help us save time. Health is priceless. The Government will mobilize all the financial means necessary to provide assistance, to care for the sick, to save lives whatever the cost. Many of the decisions we are making, many of the changes we are making, we will keep because we also learn from this crisis, because our caregivers are great for innovation and mobilization, and what we are doing, we will learn all the lessons and come out with an even stronger health system.

The general mobilization is also that of our researchers. Numerous French and European clinical trial programs are underway to produce rapid, efficient and effective diagnoses in quantity. We are going to improve things in this area, and at both French and European level, work has started. Our teachers, with the support of private actors, are already working on several treatment tracks in Paris, Marseille and Lyon, among others. The protocols have started. I hope that in the coming weeks and months, we will have the first treatments that we can generalize. Europe has everything it takes to offer the world the antidote to Covid-19. Teams are also hard at work to invent a vaccine. It won't be able to see the light of day for several months, but it carries great hopes. We are also mobilizing our French and European research, and I will continue to intensify it.

This ordeal also requires social mobilization towards the most deprived, the most fragile. The winter break will be postponed for two months, and I ask the Government for exceptional measures, in this context, for the most vulnerable.Finally, the ordeal we are going through requires general mobilization on the economic front. Already, restaurateurs, traders, craftsmen, hoteliers, professionals in tourism, culture, events, transport are suffering, I know it. Entrepreneurs are worried about their order books, and all of you are wondering about your job, your purchasing power. I know it is legitimate. With the decisions I have just announced this evening, this economic concern will obviously increase.

We will not add to health difficulties the fear of bankruptcy for entrepreneurs, the anxiety of unemployment and difficult end of the month for employees. Also, everything will be done to protect our employees and to protect our companies whatever the cost, there too. From the coming days, an exceptional and massive mechanism of partial unemployment will be implemented. First announcements were made by the ministers. We will go much further. The state will pay compensation to employees forced to stay at home. In this matter, I want us to take inspiration from what the Germans were able to implement, for example, with a more generous system, simpler than ours. I want us to be able to preserve jobs and skills, that is to say that employees can stay in the company, even if they are forced to stay at home, and that we pay them. I want us to be able to protect our independents too. We will take all necessary measures to give this guarantee economically.

All companies who wish to can postpone without justification, without formality, without penalty the payment of contributions and taxes due in March. We will then work on the necessary cancellation or rescheduling measures, but I know each other collectively, it always takes too long to do this. I want simple measures for our economic strengths. The deadlines that are due in the coming days and weeks will be suspended for all those who need them. We will defend our businesses of all sizes. We will defend all workers. At the same time, I asked the Government to prepare a national and European recovery plan that is consistent with our priorities and our commitments for the future.

We must also provide a European response. The Central Bank has already today announced its first decisions. Will they be sufficient? I do not believe that. It will be up to him to take new ones. But I will also be very clear with you here this evening: we Europeans will not allow a financial and economic crisis to spread. We will react strongly and we will react quickly. All European governments must make the decisions to support the activity and then to revive whatever it costs. France will do it, and it is this line that I will bring to the European level on your behalf. This is already what I did during the exceptional council held yesterday. I do not know what the financial markets will give in the coming days, and I will be just as clear.Europe will react in an organized, massive way to protect its economy. I also hope that we can organize ourselves internationally, and I appeal to the responsibility of the G7 and G20 powers. As of tomorrow, I will speak with President TRUMP to offer him an exceptional initiative between the members of the G7, since he is the one who has the presidency. It is not division that will make it possible to respond to what is today a global crisis, but rather our ability to see things together early and act together.

My dear compatriots, all these measures are necessary for the safety of all of us and I ask you to unite around them. We do not, in fact, come to the end of a crisis of such magnitude without being united. A crisis of such magnitude cannot be overcome without great individual and collective discipline, without unity. I hear today in our country voices that go in all directions. Some tell us: "you are not going far enough" and would like to close everything and worry about everything, sometimes disproportionately, and others consider that this risk is not for them. I tried to give you this evening what should be the line of our entire Nation. Today we must avoid two pitfalls, my dear compatriots.

On the one hand, the nationalist withdrawal. This virus does not have a passport.We must join forces, coordinate our responses, cooperate. France is hard at work.European coordination is essential, and I will make sure of it. We will no doubt have measures to take, but they must be taken to reduce trade between the areas which are affected and those which are not. These are not necessarily national borders. We must not give in to any facility, no panic. We will no doubt have control measures, border closings to take, but we will have to take them when they are relevant and we will have to take them as Europeans, on a European scale, because it is on this scale that we have built our freedoms and protections.

The other pitfall would be individualistic withdrawal. Never do such tests be overcome alone. On the contrary, it is in solidarity, by telling us rather than thinking I, that we will rise to this immense challenge. This is why I want to tell you this evening that I count on you for the days, the weeks, the months to come. I count on you because the Government cannot do it alone, and because we are a nation.Everyone has a role to play. I count on you to respect the instructions which are and will be given by the authorities, and in particular these famous barrier gestures against the virus. Today, they are still too little applied. This means washing your hands long enough with soap or hydroalcoholic gels. This means greeting without kissing or shaking hands so as not to transmit the virus. It means standing at a distance of one meter. These gestures may seem harmless to you. They save lives, lives. This is why, my dear compatriots, I solemnly call on you to adopt them.

Each of us has a share of the protection of others, starting with our loved ones. I am counting on you too to take care of the most vulnerable of our compatriots, not to visit our elders. It is, I am well aware, a heartbreaker. It is however temporarily necessary. Write, call, get news, protect by limiting visits. I count on you, yes, to also help the neighbor who, when he is a caregiver, needs a childcare solution for his children to go to work and take care of others. I count on companies to help all employees who can work at home to do so. I count on all of us to invent new solidarity in this period. As such, I ask the Government to work with the social partners, with associations in this direction. This crisis should be the occasion for a national mobilization of solidarity between generations. We have the springs.There are already actions that exist on the ground. We can make it even stronger together.

I obviously also count on all of our caregivers. I know everything they have already done, I know what they have to do. The Government and I will be there, we will take all our responsibilities for you. I think of all of our caregivers in the hospital, who will have the most serious cases to deal with, but also many emergencies. I think of the doctors, the nurses, the nurses, all the caregivers who are also out of the hospital who have mobilized tremendously and whom we will be calling upon more and more in the weeks to come.

I know I can count on you. The Minister of Health will also have the opportunity to clarify the rules in the coming hours so that we can help you protect yourself from the virus. It is the respect we have for you, and it is obviously what the Nation owes you. The rules will be clear for everyone, they will also be proportionate and explained.

I count on all of you to make Nation at bottom. To awaken the best in us, to reveal that generous soul that, in the past, has enabled France to face the hardest trials.

My dear compatriots, tomorrow we will have to learn the lessons of the moment we are going through, question the development model in which our world has been engaged for decades and which reveals its flaws in the light of day, question the weaknesses of our democracies. What this pandemic is already revealing is that free health care without conditions of income, career or profession, our welfare state are not costs or burdens but precious goods, essential assets when fate strikes. What this pandemic reveals is that there are goods and services that must be placed outside the laws of the market. To delegate our food, our protection, our ability to take care of our living environment to others is madness.We must regain control of it, build even more than we already do a France, a sovereign Europe, a France and a Europe which firmly hold their destiny in hand.The coming weeks and months will require breaking decisions in this direction. I will assume them.

But the time today is for the protection of our fellow citizens and the cohesion of the Nation. The time has come for this sacred union which consists in following all the same path, not to give in to any panic, no fear, no facility, but to regain that strength of soul which is ours and which has enabled our people to overcome so many crises throughout history.

United France is our best asset in the troubled times we are going through. We will all stand together.

Long live the Republic !

Long live France !