



**FRENCH PRESIDENCY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
GLOBAL DIGITAL SOLIDARITY FUND
SPEECH
OF THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS
MR BERNARD KOUCHNER**

(Paris, 6 May 2008)

Hello, I am here with the Mayor of Lyon, the president of the Region and, in particular, Alain Madelin, president of the Global Digital Solidarity Fund.

I am contributing to the great Global Digital Solidarity Fund project and the international conference planned for November in Lyon. These are two very worthy projects.

Firstly, a huge funding project that Alain Madelin, Jean-Jacques and Gérard will explain to you, and a project that consists of precise meetings on themes that have already been established. One of the projects will harness the progress made in terms of digital solidarity in the field of health, and the other in the field of education.

These are completely innovative projects that could require human support in the form of twinning partnerships, along the lines of the old twinning of towns and regions, between people who know each other or are used to working together. This human element is essential for a project so advanced in terms of scientific and digital progress to see the light of day.

It is the first time these two approaches have been combined, working with long-established institutions in developing countries. These digital solidarity projects are effective, and in any case promising, ways of driving development, in Africa particularly, but not exclusively.

We are working with the French Directorate-General of International Cooperation and Development (DGCID), the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the French State Secretariat for Development and Francophony. We have embarked on this with great determination and, I should point out, great warmth.

During the French presidency of the Council of the Union – as this commitment will be confirmed by the participation of five developing countries and five European countries before the meeting next November – this meeting concerning development, and concerning Africa more particularly, as I have said, will be a very significant event, among others, that reflects the commitment of France and the French presidency, on behalf of the twenty-six other countries.

I will be announcing other things that will illustrate France's interest. I reiterate that the presidency is not representing the interests of France, but those of the twenty-six other EU countries. We must not be underhand, but rather we must persuade those countries and represent them when the time comes during these six months, carrying a message that is accepted, ideally unanimously, but at least by the vast majority.

We will have other occasions, but this is an excellent opportunity to work on the relationships between civil society and governments in the twenty-seven EU countries, particularly in the field of development.