



Speech by M. Jacques CHIRAC, President of the Republic, at the inauguration of the Soleil Synchrotron facility in the Essonne department.

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It gives me particular pleasure to be with you to inaugurate in Saint-Aubin, on the Saclay Plateau, the SOLEIL synchrotron facility. I salute everyone involved in its construction and want to tell them, on behalf of everyone, of our admiration and gratitude.

Thanks to them, France today has a unique instrument: an impressive over-300 m ring whose devices have been adjusted to a thousandth of a millimetre. An incredible light source, capable of exploring the very heart of matter. This is an exemplary achievement.

An exemplary achievement, first of all, because SOLEIL can be used to further all human knowledge: astronomy, biology, chemistry and archaeology. What is the origin of the universe? Where does life come from? How have human societies developed? SOLEIL will help answer all these questions by enabling us to find out more about the composition of the most distant stars and the most ancient artefacts.

In the area of health and the environment too, SOLEIL will be extremely useful, we'll be able to observe biological structures in their smallest detail, to develop new medicines and identify traces of toxic chemicals to step up the fight against pollution. Metallurgy, electronics, and agribusiness: here too, SOLEIL will provide the essential data to design the technologies which will lead to innovations and tomorrow's jobs.

SOLEIL's organization is also exemplary: by creating together a civil corporation, the CNRS [National Centre for Scientific Research] and CEA [Atomic Energy Commission] have combined the strength of two major public establishments with the flexibility of a slim structure. It should serve as a model for others.

SOLEIL's financing is exemplary too because it unites local and central government authorities. The local authorities agreed back in 1997, when the



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importance of major scientific facilities was sometimes disputed, to provide important financial support for the construction of SOLEIL, with central government funding its running costs.

Finally, SOLEIL exemplifies openness: here, every year, 400 teams, 2,000 people from both French and foreign research establishments and companies will be able to explore matter at the smallest level of detail.

Indeed collaboration between teams and between institutions, the pooling of resources and researchers are one of the keys to tomorrow's science. Since 2002, we have been putting in place the tools to encourage them: 66 competitiveness clusters, 20 Carnot Institutes [Institut Carnot is a label for public research laboratories working in partnership with industry] and 13 thematic advanced research networks have been created. It's no coincidence that SOLEIL is participating in two clusters and one network.

More broadly speaking, in the era of global competition, I wanted to give priority to research and innovation. Unprecedented resources have been committed: an extra 6,000 jobs and 6 billion since 2004, i.e. up 16% in three years.

New institutions have been established to advise on research priorities, the High Council for Science and Technology and the National Research Agency.

With the creation of the first research and higher education clusters, we are laying the foundations for the revitalization of our research and innovation system.

With the Lisbon Strategy, the European Union has set itself the ambitious goal of devoting 3% of its gross domestic product to research. While our public-sector research has gone well beyond the 1% threshold, private-sector research hasn't yet reached the 2% necessary to achieve the objective.

So we must go further: give stronger encouragement to businesses to invest in research and innovate. This is why the Finance Bill provides for an increase in the R&D tax credit [designed to increase firms' competitiveness by bolstering their R&D effort] and the creation of a beneficial tax status for very fast-growing concerns. These will complete the benefits which the Jeunes Entreprises Innovantes (JEIs) [France's equivalent of the Young Innovative Company (YIC)] are already enjoying.

It is also up to us to strengthen the taste for science particularly among young people. I am delighted to see that SOLEIL is according such great importance to spreading scientific culture.

I'd like to once again very warmly to congratulate all of you who have built SOLEIL. It's an additional asset for the Saclay Plateau, which has all the resources to rival its American and Asian counterparts. It's a crucial advantage for French research. I want to tell you how extremely grateful I am



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to you for your commitment to science, innovation and progress. Thank you

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