Minister of State for State Reform and Simplification

Speech by Thierry Mandon

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To be checked against delivered speech.

The Digital media Advisor and other participants,

Language elements for the OECD speech entitled "Open Government and Transparency, a Lever for Economic Development"

Ladies and gentlemen,

Last week I joined the President of the French Republic at the *Third Open Government Partnership* meeting which took place in New York on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly. This visit, which was a happy moment, was the expression of France's engagement to work with its peers on open government issues. Discussions have shown that even if in very different situations, notably on the economic front, countries often face similar challenges in transforming the state.

Three reasons why open government transforms the state.

In his speech, President François Hollande underlined the importance of openness, transparency and citizens' involvement in public affairs to France and this across all policy areas.

(Democracy)

The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, that is still enshrined as a preamble in the French Constitution, is a powerful reminder: citizens should be able to contribute to the elaboration of legislation. They must be able to ascertain the effectiveness of public expenditure by themselves. They should be able to hold any government official accountable.

It is a long story but a story that takes a new twist at a time when several billion people are connected thanks to the Internet. This link to the web not only expands communication opportunities, but is genuinely *empowering* to learn, to understand and to create, especially to create value – to make a reality of all the rights I mentioned above and which until recently were merely theoretical. Today it is possible to implement these secular commitments, thanks to the digital revolution.

(Growth)

The second reason why we urge public services to share widely their data and models, is because every day we see how valuable these resources are for the economy itself… By supporting social and economic innovation, by facilitating the decision-making of large businesses, by promoting the harmonisation of decision-making processes. Yet again, this is an old matter; we have come to rely on our statistical information systems and our geographical and meteorological information. However, today we have a hundred times more data at our disposal and these will create a hundred more new ways to use them…..

The economic potential of openness and use of public administration data is, as such, a striking example because it underlines what still needs to be done (studies fail to identify economic benefits accurately) and the economic opportunities derived from open data (everyone agrees that it is worth several tens of billions dollars). We are talking about 13 000 billion in the next 5 years amongst the G20 group of countries. For France, which is the 5th largest economy in the world, this is a major challenge. Etalab, which is currently working on opening up data in France, organises administrative competitions that play a role in developing or which have given rise to companies designing new business models based on data.

Here one touches upon new industrial policies which we have not yet finished to define or refine. The French Government has laid down clearly the principle of free public information that will be freely reusable and shared in user-friendly formats and is working in this direction. We can also clearly see, as stated in the latest book by Jeremy Rifkin, that cooperation, sharing and organisational components are increasingly being integrated into today's economy that is based on public goods. It should be noted that all these data don't share the same economic potential; we will focus our efforts on data with greater growth potential.

However, there will be limits to these principles. Privacy protection is one of these: for France, it is of overriding importance, as important as transparency in public life, and we will not deviate from it. The monopoly of large platforms is another one: sharing data should not imply the enrichment of large monopolies. Faced with such a situation, France would not be able to place legal or technical restrictions to stop the complete evasion of data.

(Establishing modernity)

In this Internet era, the principles of openness, cooperation and responsiveness to the proposal of citizens, are for us, at the very heart of the state reform strategy.
Our aim is simple: we are aware that all major industrial revolutions were based on appropriate institutions that made them possible. It was not only our engineers who made the industrial revolution or the post- World War Two economic boom possible but also our schools, justice and tax system.
We will need institutions for the digital revolution. And government openness is often the trigger that spawns the modernisation of institutions. Tolerating a greater transparency, embracing innovation from the outside, answering questions from society, requesting citizens' contribution, building capacity in using one's own data autonomously to solve problems, is a path to modernisation that we are committed to following.

A few months ago, France created a *High Authority for Public life Transparency*. Its mission is to make available for everyone the declaration of assets and interests of public officials. A few days ago, the decree implementing the crowdfunding ordinance was published in order to facilitate this new way of value creation. These are laws that reflect France's intent to move towards more transparent institutions in an open society.

Furthermore, this modernisation is a main focus, not only to address our domestic challenges, but maybe more importantly, to address global challenges that the whole world is facing. As the President of the Republic reiterated at the Open Government Partnership, how can we meet the challenges of climate change if we are not first sharing all the scientific data enabling us to assess that change in a comprehensive way and to look together for new solutions? How to fight terrorism and organised crime effectively if we cannot trace tax evasion networks and dirty money?

And lastly, how can we succeed in achieving a democratic globalisation, taking decisions with the people, if all of them don't have equal access to the same information?

Our strategy

As you can see, an open government, for France, it is a bit like The Declaration of the Rights of Man in the Internet era. Our strategy is being implemented through a coherent State modernisation and digital transformation approach.

State digital transformation is one of the three pillars of my state modernisation plan, the two others consist of a review of the State's missions and the management of skills within the civil service. It is a question of providing a more useful State, more effective, more innovative and more democratic.

For instance, two weeks ago, we presented a new technology strategy based on open platforms and data interoperability. An open government cannot be achieved without a well-suited technology strategy.

We have integrated agile development methods at the core of the state with what we call "state start-up companies" because open government must primarily be used to tackle issues effectively, otherwise it would be nothing but good intentions. These state start-ups allow us to try new strategies of alliance with society's dynamic forces. This way we have designed an open source software, combining state services with volunteer contributors, which serves as a simulation engine on our entire fiscal and social law called Openfisca.fr. It is currently used in numerous projects in the research community, the business world and by government authorities. That is also how we have chosen to support an initiative from the web portal called OpenStreet map (a Wikipedia version for maps) in order to speed up the delivery, in open data, of a comprehensive geo-localised addresses database.

We developed an ambitious open data policy, including a web portal, data.gouv.fr, which was recently awarded a prize by the OGP, rewarding citizen engagement initiatives. Indeed, in France, citizens can improve, interpret or even produce public data by themselves and then share it with the government on the data.gouv.fr website. 14 000 datasets are referenced on it: almost 4000 users have created an account to make use of it and create new projects.

We have just created a brand new function within the government, "Data chief executive officer", a kind of state *Chief Data Officer,* who will be responsible at the same time for improving our data quality, its proper circulation within the government, its openness and also to ensure that it is truly used to improve the quality of public policies. Strategies based on data, new decision support tools will not be lacking from a project of public service modernisation.

In addition, the reason why we wanted to join the OGP and its Steering Committee is that we believe that this revolution is all about innovation and innovation does not happen on its own. It is done through interactions and exchanges with other innovators. It is, and has always been the only way forward.

At the end of the week, the Prime Minister will launch a major open consultation dealing with all aspects of digital transmutation. The open data, the open government, State digital strategies will be the main focus. It will form the basis of our strategy for a more open government but also the catalyst put before Parliament. We thus will continue to seek further progress on these major issues.

Deep down, I was telling you before, open government is all about old values deeply rooted in the Republic and also probably about new ways of implementing these values. So, to me this reform is crucial because without public authorities of this time we will neither achieve economic development nor the other components of human development, which is our common aim. That is why I am delighted to be here with you, this morning, to exchange views on our strategies so that they can be as effective as possible.