

Chief Executive Officer of the Compagnie Nationale du Rhône (CNR) since 2013, Elisabeth Ayrault created IFGR with Erik Orsenna – CNR is currently IFGR's main sponsor –. She is also a member of the Boards of Directors of the Syndicat des Energies Renouvelables and the CEA. Lastly, she is ViceChairwoman of the Supervisory Board of the Grand Port Maritime de Marseille and of the Board of Directors of SNCF réseau.

Convinced of the role that companies can play in the energy transition, Elisabeth Ayrault invites them, as well as our elected representatives and citizens, to build appropriate responses to develop our resilience and act jointly in order to preserve the balance of ecosystems.



Mobilizing companies to avoid chaos

We are facing an unprecedented crisis, both in terms of its global scope and its many impacts. We need to take a step back: to assess its severity, analyse its real causes, understand the strengths and weaknesses of our current economic model, but also take a stance on the strategic choices for emerging from the crisis and the world of tomorrow.

What dynamics are we seeing today?

Companies joining forces to contribute to the health "war effort"; policies freeing up huge resources to organise the protection of civilians and our economic system at european and global level; citizens committing themselves to recreating links... These powerful and supportive impulses coexist with other more negative signals: the temptation for some to free themselves from environmental or fiscal obligations in order to quickly relaunch the economic machine; the resurgence of nationalist reflexes or withdrawal into oneself; the mistrust of citizen-consumers with regard to political or scientific

discourse ; the degradation of our relationship with nature; the effects of globalization and a frantic race to consume to the detriment of the common good that is our planet; the low resilience of our societies in the face of new challenges, whether climatic, health or food-related. These paradoxes revealed by the crisis show other deeper flaws in our system.

The global crisis we are going through cannot simply be "a bad memory". We must quickly learn from it and prepare ourselves to face other crises, whose scale and repercussions will be just as great or even more intense.

Rethinking our model for dealing with future crises

Changing our development model means accepting an essential prerequisite: addressing the root causes and not just the consequences of the situation we are in. The precepts of ancestral medicine and wisdom remind us that a body (human or social) is an

interconnected entity in which the treatment of a local consequence can only temporarily solve the problem. Despite bandages, the bleeding will not stop until we treat the cause.

Much of this crisis is rooted in our relationship with nature and with each other. What does it make us aware of?

- **To have the courage to face reality:** this epidemic is a terrible reminder that humans are part of a vast ecosystem, the Living, that none of us can control. It also shows that an imbalance caused in one part of the planet can have a very wide impact. Health, biodiversity, climate, and the development of societies are all related issues, and unfortunately, people have forgotten this.

"Companies are bearers of solutions that they can quickly implement with their stakeholders and in the territories"

- **Acting together:** achieving the objectives of the Paris Climate Agreement or Agenda 2030 will only be possible if all States make clear and firm commitments. In each country, all actors have a role to play, governments alone will not be able to change the world.

Supporting and accompanying " companies in the transition" to a sustainable economy

Companies have their share of responsibility for the degradation of our environment, because they are part of a model that encourages us to always put the economy at the centre of decision-making. However, I

remain convinced that they will be at the heart of the transition to a new common project, combining economy, environment and society.

Companies are bearers of solutions that they can quickly implement with their stakeholders and in the territories where they operate. Some of them have already understood this and have put their strength at the service of this transition by adapting their governance and the relationship with their ecosystem. They have stepped up the development of tools related to training, improved their processes, and are working to ensure that their teams take ownership of their *raison d'être* in order to move towards a more balanced model.

To put companies at the service of this change, government support is essential as soon as this health crisis is over.

Irrespective of their sector of activity or size, these "companies in transition" have the following in common:

- **Awareness of long time.** This amounts to favouring a model of long-term growth and development instead of the satisfaction of short-term profit. This vision not only strengthens the foundations of a solid economic model but also increases the positive impact of the company in its ecosystem.
- **An ethic of responsibility.** The company must voluntarily contribute to the improvement of the ecosystem in which it operates, without feeling obliged to do so by circumstances.

This implies integrating the representation of Nature in its decision making. Is a production process virtuous when the plastic waste generated is outsourced to emerging countries?



- **The culture of local anchoring to serve the implementation of sustainable national or global strategies**, based on the principle of "Act local, Think global", which replaces the overly simplistic slogan of relocating activities. This goes hand in hand with the implementation of a partnership dynamic with other actors, politicians, associations, scientists....In renewable energies, this model is reflected not only in the development of renewable production tools, but also in the sharing of the value generated by these investments with the territories and the population concerned.
- **Consistency between what is done and what is said by the company**. This requires stakeholders and shareholders to take a more enlightened look at the company, encourage innovation and, in particular, recognise a right to make mistakes in the search for a more virtuous model.

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The return to "business as usual" will in no way enable us to counter the threats that lie ahead. We need to begin the transition to a truly sustainable system in which business will be a powerful tool. It is up to us, as business leaders, to demonstrate our ability to take responsibility and act quickly.