

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the French Residence this evening for a French Tech Digital Thursday. I welcome those of you here as British or non-British investors established in the UK, young companies from France, and all those of you who, as journalists and company heads, take an interest in our entrepreneurs. This evening is going to allow seven French start-ups, which have been selected on the basis of their pitches, to present their projects to you. These start-ups are in a phase of strong growth and are fundraising to expand into the international market.

I think this event is also important for several other reasons. It demonstrates the government's support for French start-ups. This support is given concrete substance with French Tech, France's entrepreneurial and digital movement, which its director, David Monteau, will present to you in a moment. This evening follows several other Digital Thursdays organized in French ministries. This is the first international one. The Minister of State for the Digital Sector has been detained by parliamentary business, which is why she isn't here yet, but she'll be joining us after the pitches to say a few words.

I'd like to devote this evening to France's attractiveness. Early this month, John Chambers, the CEO of Cisco Systems, underlined the similarities between France and Silicon Valley, and has announced two-hundred-million dollars of investment in our country's start-ups. This decision highlights a quality that many recognize in us, our entrepreneurs, engineers, artists and intellectuals: creativity. It is why our Foreign Minister, Laurent Fabius, launched an image campaign, "Créative France", with the Economy Minister, Emmanuel Macron. It shines a spotlight on the expertise and innovative qualities of our entrepreneurs, who are successful in sectors as varied as finance, climate and health.

I've been in the UK for a year now, and every day I see evidence of French expertise in this country's economy. Our big companies such as Veolia and Thales have expertise which is acknowledged in the UK. But French start-ups are also developing here, and their innovation is increasingly being recognized.

France is becoming a nation of start-ups. Some of them are now known worldwide. As investors, you'll have followed Criteo's stock market flotation : the company is now valued at more than two-point-six billion dollars. More than ten million people use BlaBlaCar's ridesharing service, while Venteprivée.com, another French unicorn,

is enjoying double-figure growth and diversifying its e-commerce portfolio to include tourism.

This is why I'm opening the French Residence to investors and start-ups this evening. The seven start-ups which are going to pitch to you are each going to present their technology and business model. This should give you a taste of the vibrancy of France's start-ups.

But before that, I'm going to hand over to David Monteau, the director of the French Tech mission. David is leading this government initiative to nurture young companies in our ecosystems. To give you an example, in Lyon alone, seven thousand companies and fifty thousand jobs are part of French Tech.

Later on, Albin Serviant, a French entrepreneur and the co-founder of French Connect London will lead the proceedings, before handing over to Axelle Lemaire.

I wish you a pleasant evening.