

The Emperor's New Vision

Paris, Earth. Emperor Ruffin's New Years speech for the Chamber of Deputies set out an ambitious, expansive agenda for the coming year.

"The universe is not a fair and just place naturally. It is up to us, the people in it, to make it so. Our efforts are needed both at home and abroad... I believe our aptitude for overcoming adversity and our success are products of our French civilisation, and that gives us a privileged position to improve the world".

In his speech he set out the great challenges for France: the Kafer war, colonial policy, the trans-Mediterranean tube, restoring the ISOS treaty in Africa and promoting peace in South America.

As expected, the emperor continued his emphasis on military spending and interstellar ambitions. The Kafer War, he warned, is not over. The supply lines to Gamma Serpenti are long and winding, easily disrupted by raiders yet necessary to restrain "this implacable, malevolent foe that has destroyed so much that is dear to us". In order to safeguard Kafer space the fleet must be updated and new outposts built in occupied systems. He also praised international cooperation with other spacefaring nations in this essential task, and lamented that "certain powers" appear to be uninterested in doing their share in defending humanity.

The emperor also mentioned the need for further exploration, expansion and development of the colonies. "In today's world, peace, security and welfare of people are indivisible. We need to know what is out there, for our security, for our thirst for knowledge and for our wish for prosperity." In particular he mentioned initiating terraforming of Sans Souci, a glacial world on the edge of the French Arm likely to be amenable to active terraforming. Although the speech did not specifically mention the 61 Cygni cluster it is widely believed that there exist plans to develop stutterwarp tugs to explore it, and the emperor's promise that he hoped that "French eyes will see many new solar system over the next year" could be interpreted as a major push in this direction. He also thanked the Pentapods for "extending a limb of friendship across space" in establishing an enclave on Kimanjano.

The speech was noteworthy for not mentioning FCFR, the French Colonial Reconstruction Fund, which several members of the Chamber of Deputies have urged the emperor to refill due to the soaring costs of rebuilding the colonies on the French arm. The emperor also did not mention the insurgency on Kimanjano, except quoting de Gaulle: "The French Empire shall be one Empire, that French strength shall be one strength, and the voice of all patriotic Frenchmen shall be one voice."

Remarking that "France cannot observe world events from the sidelines" he invited the stakeholders in the Rio Plata conflict to Paris for negotiation. Similarly he suggested that UAR and France should again "sit at the table" to finalize the so far beached ISOS treaty for economic development of African regions.

Overall, the speech aimed at inspiring the empire towards further greatness. However, it was notably weak both on colonial reconstruction and weak on domestic policy. Issues such as the declining growth rate, public dislike of colonial subsidies, the need for reform of extraplanetary investment law and dealing with corruption in Gabon were not high on the agenda despite great public support for them. Whether the stellar ambitions of the emperor

are grand enough to make the French citizens look up and outwards rather than down at the everyday problems of the Empire remains to be seen.

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