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JEAN HORNAIN'S CASE FOR A HIGH-PERFORMING ECOLOGICAL ECONOMY

Against a backdrop marked by the climate emergency, tensions over resources and geopolitical realignments, Jean Hornain's book *Ecology & Economy: A Shared Destiny*, written by the Chief Executive Officer of CITEO, offers, in these harsh and troubled times, a resolutely optimistic and strategic reading of the ecological transition. Far from opposing environmental protection and economic performance, the author puts forward a strong argument: these two dimensions are not only compatible, but deeply interdependent.

For a long time, public debate was structured around a simplistic and counterproductive opposition. On one side stood the economy, associated with growth, production and value creation; on the other, ecology, perceived as a set of constraints that would slow down this dynamic. Jean Hornain overturns this widely shared paradigm. He reminds us that the economy is fundamentally based on natural resources and ecological balances. Damaging these therefore means weakening the very foundations of prosperity. This approach is in line with ecological economics, which considers human activity as embedded within the biosphere and dependent on its limits.

Yet the book's main contribution lies in the idea that ecology must become a driver of performance, serving a more resilient economy. The ecological transition is not merely a necessity, nor simply a moral or regulatory constraint: it is a major industrial project that must rebuild trust and generate support.

To this end, the author highlights the economic value — and not only the ecological value — of sobriety and material circularity: using fewer resources, using them for longer, and recycling them in full.

This dynamic forms the very basis of the circular economy, as opposed to the linear economy. It is no longer a matter of extracting, producing, consuming and discarding, but of rethinking the entire life cycle of products. Waste reduction, material reuse and closed-loop recycling: these principles imply a profound transformation of value chains. Companies must integrate these issues from the design stage, in cooperation with all economic stakeholders.

Beyond economic considerations, Jean Hornain also emphasises the geopolitical dimension of the circular economy. Dependence on raw materials, often concentrated in certain regions of the world, creates major vulnerabilities for states, as recent events have shown. In this context, developing sustainable local sectors becomes an issue of sovereignty and security. Circularity therefore appears as a lever to strengthen economic independence and secure strategic supplies.

This transformation requires a profound evolution within companies. They are called upon to fully integrate environmental issues into their strategy, to adopt a long-term vision and to cooperate more closely with public and private stakeholders, following the model of extended producer responsibility systems. Citeo was the first concrete application of this model, with more than €1.7 billion invested each year in the reduction, reuse and recycling of packaging and paper. For Jean Hornain, our companies are key actors in the ecological transition. Within the right regulatory framework, and provided they are given the necessary time horizon, they are capable of innovating, investing and steering environmental performance just as effectively as economic performance.

Jean Hornain's conclusion is unequivocal: ecology is not a cost, but an opportunity. It enables innovation, secures resources, strengthens sovereignty and helps build long-term prosperity. The economic performance of the twenty-first century will depend on the ability of companies and states to place that performance at the service of the common good that is our planet. This is a challenge for France, for Europe, for the planet – and an objective we can achieve together.