

# Providing an essential service

Stéphane Richard, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer

**F**or more than a year now, the Covid-19 pandemic has rocked the whole world with its sheer magnitude and ferocity. My thoughts are with everyone who has suffered illness or loss as a direct result of the virus. In all our operating countries, we will continue to provide support during these difficult times.

As the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Orange group, I feel a deep sense of pride and gratitude when I reflect on the recent past. First and foremost, our networks were able to accommodate the surge in traffic, playing an essential role in keeping society and the economy running in all our operating countries as well as ensuring people could continue to work, learn, entertain themselves and, most importantly, keep in touch with their loved ones near and far. Secondly, our teams pulled out all the stops to offer our retail and business customers the best connectivity has to offer. Thirdly, despite the circumstances, we successfully stepped up the implementation of our Engage 2025 strategic plan, reaching milestones in several projects along the way.

The strategic priorities set out in Engage 2025 in December 2019 were accelerated by the health crisis. Our commitment to more

environmentally friendly, inclusive digital technology meets growing demands from all our stakeholders, in particular our customers, partners and shareholders.

We continued to deploy very high-speed fiber broadband networks, with over 47 million homes now fiber-ready worldwide. Despite the pandemic and the various lockdowns, we laid more fiber-optic cables in 2020 than in 2019, which is no mean feat. Identified by the Group as a future-proof solution 10 years ago, fiber stands out today as the most suitable technology to cater for the current needs of our customers around the world. We strengthened our position as a 5G mobile operator by launching 5G in Poland, Spain, Luxembourg and France in 2020 after it was first deployed in Romania at the end of 2019. This technological revolution will enable the emergence of new uses to address the major economic, health and environmental challenges we face.

By optimizing the way in which our infrastructure is managed, we are pursuing the dual objective of continuing our broadband roll-out and enhancing our strategic mobile assets. In January 2021, we launched Orange Concessions and forged new partnerships to give greater leeway in supporting the deployment of fiber in rural France. Deriving a value of

€600 per socket, we demonstrated to the market the strong potential of such an operation, proving at the same time the suitability of our strategic choices. When we published our results in February, we announced the launch of our European TowerCo, Totem, to derive higher value from our passive mobile infrastructure assets. Totem will have an initial portfolio of around 25,500 towers in France and Spain. Forming part of our long-term vision, this industrial project has a clear growth objective.

Additionally, we continue to expand by accelerating in our growth areas. Set up five years ago, Orange Cyberdefense has become the leading provider of cybersecurity services in Europe, in a market that has seen a fourfold increase in cyberattacks between 2019 and 2020. In Africa and the Middle East, we are pursuing our multi-service operator strategy, particularly in financial services. We launched Orange Bank Africa in Côte d'Ivoire to extend access to fully digital banking services, attracting over 500,000 customers in the first three months of 2021.

Digital technology has played a key role throughout the pandemic and I firmly believe it will also orient the economic recovery toward fairer, more environmentally friendly growth. As a major digital player worldwide, we work to help businesses and regions successfully execute a responsible

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digital transformation that is both inclusive and mindful of ecological considerations.

Our efforts reflect our purpose: “As a trusted partner, Orange gives everyone the keys to a responsible digital world”, which we incorporated into our company bylaws following a vote at the 2020 Shareholders’ Meeting. It already guides our corporate vision, and the next step will be to use the purpose as a compass in our decision-making process. With that in mind, we are going to set up a “Purpose Activation” Committee that includes people from outside the Group to ensure our choices are consistent with the kind of society we would like to help build.

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