

OPENING SPEECH

Raphaël Appert : Chairman of the Grameen Crédit Agricole Foundation

Dear friends,
Dear members of the Grameen family,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honor and a real pleasure to welcome you today to Paris, at the headquarters of the Fédération of Crédit Agricole, for, what I believe, is the first Grameen Family Gathering of this kind. Today marks a significant milestone as we bring together, the diverse organizations that share the Grameen philosophy but have been operating largely independently across the globe. I want to express how deeply moved and inspired we are to see so many leaders, innovators, and change-makers from across the globe united by a shared vision: zero poverty, zero unemployment, and zero net carbon emissions. We are here more than 60 people from 25 organizations from 18 countries from Asia, Europe, Africa, Middle East...what an achievement!

Allow me to begin by introducing the Crédit Agricole Group, which I am proud to represent. As the 10th largest bank in the world, Crédit Agricole has always been guided by its cooperative and mutual values. Founded over a century ago to serve farmers and rural communities in France, our bank has maintained its commitment to inclusive development while growing into a global financial institution. Our purpose is simple: to act every day in the interest of our customers and society. We believe finance should serve people, territories, and the real economy. What distinguishes us is our strong belief that banking must serve society and contribute to sustainable development. Our model is based on universal banking that is accessible to all, with a decentralized approach that keeps decision-making close to the communities we serve.

This belief is why Crédit Agricole decided, many years ago, to engage strongly in financial inclusion and impact finance.

In 2008, Crédit Agricole Group and Professor Yunus, created the Grameen Crédit Agricole Foundation with an initial endowment of 50 million euros. This was a unique commitment for a global banking group. The goal was clear: to contribute to the fight against poverty through financial inclusion in emerging countries. We believed in two strong ideas:

- First, there is no fight against poverty without access to finance.
- Second, women are powerful agents of change. When women are financed and supported, they transform families, communities, and economies.

Seventeen years later, the Foundation has deployed more than 400 million euros, 8 times its endowment, supporting more than 150 partners in 40 countries, serving millions of people, mostly women in rural areas. What makes the Foundation special is its double culture:

- the banking and financial engineering culture of Crédit Agricole,
- and the social and grassroots culture of Grameen Trust and the Grameen movement.

This combination allows us to finance, to innovate, and also to provide technical assistance, training, and long-term patient capital. What distinguishes our approach is:

- Our unique positioning in Africa,
- Our focus on women,
- Our commitment to rural areas,
- Our innovative approach combining financial support with technical assistance,
- Our patient capital structure that allows us to take a long-term view.

Today, we are entering a new phase with our strategic plan LIFT 2028. LIFT stands for Leading Innovating, Financing, and Transforming to address the three zeros championed by Professor Yunus: zero poverty, zero unemployment, and zero net carbon emissions. The world has changed: digital finance, climate change, geopolitical shocks, and higher interest rates are transforming emerging economies.

Our approach is built on two pillars:

1. Diversify our action by linking financing and protection. We will expand our support to women entrepreneurs, invest in climate adaptation, and develop innovative financial tools—like our new Women Empowerment for Climate Fund—to build resilience in the face of climate change.
2. Strengthen cooperation within the Grameen family and beyond. We want to unify our voice, share knowledge, and create synergies that amplify our impact. Together, we can achieve more than any of us can alone.

Our ambition is to diversify our action, cooperate more strongly with our founders and partners, and innovate in new models such as blended finance, thematic funds, and digital financial services. We also want to be:

- a partner for financial institutions in their transformation,
- a global expert in women's financial inclusion,
- and an actor in climate adaptation, clean energy, water, and sustainable agriculture.

Professor Yunus has given us a powerful vision: Zero poverty, Zero unemployment, Zero net carbon emissions. This vision is fully aligned with our strategy.

- Zero poverty: through inclusive finance, microfinance, insurance, and new financial tools to help people build sustainable livelihoods.
- Zero unemployment: by supporting entrepreneurship, SMEs, womenled businesses, and youth initiatives.
- Zero net carbon emissions: by financing climate adaptation, clean energy, sustainable agriculture, and by launching funds like Women Empowerment for Climate.

We see the Three Zeros not as a slogan, but as a framework for action. LIFT 2028 is our contribution to this global movement.

So why do I strongly believe that this meeting is very important?

As your agenda shows, the purpose is not only to share experiences, but also to build a stronger and more connected Grameen ecosystem. Many Grameen-inspired organizations have developed independently across the world. Each of you has unique expertise, contexts, and innovations.

This gathering aims to:

- build relationships and trust,
- identify synergies and opportunities for collaboration,
- develop a more coherent global identity,
- and define concrete next steps for long-term cooperation.

In a world where challenges are complex and global, no single organization can succeed alone. Together, we can amplify our impact, speak with a stronger voice, and accelerate progress toward the Three Zeros.

For the Grameen Crédit Agricole Foundation, this gathering is also a commitment. In our LIFT 2028 plan, we clearly state that we want to cooperate more with Grameen Trust, with Crédit Agricole Group, and with all of you. We want to share knowledge, co-invest, co-design programs, and advocate for innovative solutions.

This meeting is the first step. We hope it will lead to joint projects, common statements, and a stronger collective strategy. Our goal is not just to talk, but to act. By the end of this gathering, we want to leave with concrete plans, new partnerships, and a shared roadmap for the future. The workshops tomorrow will be particularly important as we work together to identify potential areas for network-wide cooperation and establish a framework for ongoing strategic discussions.

Dear friends,

Professor Yunus taught us that poverty is not created by people, but by systems. And systems can be changed.

The Grameen movement has already changed millions of lives. But the challenges ahead are even bigger: climate change, inequality, digital divides, fragile economies.

By coming together as a Grameen Family, we send a strong message: finance can be a force for good, cooperation is our strength, and the Three Zeros are our shared horizon.

I wish you very fruitful discussions, inspiring exchanges, and concrete partnerships.

Thank you very much, and welcome to Paris.