



Ambassador's Activities

2013

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Speech by HE Bernard Emié,
French Ambassador to the United Kingdom

at the reception to mark France's National Day

11 July 2013

Secretary of State,

Ministers,

My Lords,

Members of Parliament,

Mesdames les Députées,

Madame le Sénateur des Français de l'étranger,

Monsieur le Consul général,

Mesdames et Messieurs les Conseillers à l'Assemblée des Français de l'étranger,

Dear friends,

Chers compatriotes,

It's an honour for my wife and me to welcome you, for the third time, to the French Residence for our National Day. We brought it forward a little this year to save you having to come along on the evening of Sunday 14 July, at the end of the weekend, because we really wanted you to be here celebrating with us. We're able to have this kind of celebration of our National Day and of this unequalled friendship between France and the United Kingdom thanks to the support of our sponsors, whose names you will have seen on the way in. I'd like to thank them warmly for this.

Summer has got off to a good start for France and the United Kingdom with our respective victories at Wimbledon for Marion Bartoli in the Ladies' Singles and Andy Murray in the Men's Singles. Yes, Europe and its constituent nations are still in great physical shape and we can have confidence in them!

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Our bilateral relations have seen so many things happen over the past year. President Hollande came to London three times in 2012, and a month ago he attended the Lough Erne G8 summit. Prime Minister David Cameron paid his first visit to the Elysée Palace since François Hollande's election on 22 May 2012, and our president is due to return to the UK before the end of the year for our annual bilateral summit.

This evening, let's briefly take stock of the many areas in which we're engaged collectively.

Firstly, our joint battle for growth and jobs and against unemployment, particularly among our young people. Together, we've managed to refocus the EU's priorities on this and speed up the release of funds for youth employment. At the G8 summit we also worked together to support jobs, growth and international trade, but also to increase transparency and step up the fight against tax avoidance.

We've been actively engaged in the European project together, despite our differences. Actively engaged in deciding the multiannual financial framework – that is, the European budget for 2014 to 2020. Actively engaged in making sure the European Union increasingly devotes itself to the daily lives of our citizens. Actively engaged, too, in ensuring the development of Defence Europe, and we shall be devoting a European summit to this strategic issue in December.

But we've also been actively engaged in promoting peace in the world. President Hollande decided on a military operation in January to prevent terrorism from taking hold in the heart of Mali and the Sahel region. The United Kingdom lent him immediate political support, with

major military capabilities. Together, we're playing a part in stabilizing countries in Africa – be it Mali or Somalia – and assisting them in their development. Together, we're working to try and find solutions to the Syria tragedy through a necessary political dialogue, which is our priority objective. Together, we're pondering how to react to developments in Egypt and also how to combat the risks of nuclear proliferation in Iran, while fully taking into account the newly elected president.

We have very good political relations today; we have good economic ones, too, with growing trade and increasing investment between the two countries. And from 2014, we shall be commemorating some landmark events together: the 70th anniversary of the Allied Normandy Landings, and the start of a long series of First World War commemorations. During this time we'll be able to celebrate our alliance rooted in history and shared suffering. And celebrate our historic partnership, too, and the way we've been able to establish and safeguard peace. Peace, the prime objective of Europeans in the wake of two world wars. Peace, the foundation of Europe. Europe, that project we must tirelessly explain together, but also reform and reinvent so that it once again serves as an inspiration for the young generations, who have to understand that, in the history of mankind and civilizations, nothing should ever be definitively taken for granted.

That gives you an idea of the confidence I have in our relations. This evening, as a symbol of our friendship and our joint battle against terrorism, I'm going to be awarding a high French honour to our compatriot, Ingrid Loyau-Kennett, who distinguished herself by her bravery in London on 22 May this year.

But first we are going to listen to our national anthems.

Long live France, long live the United Kingdom, long live the friendship between France and the United Kingdom!

Awarding of the Medal of Honour for Acts of Courage and Devotion to Mrs Ingrid Loyau-Kennett

Ingrid Loyau-Kennett, you are a French citizen, and you acted heroically during the tragic events in Woolwich on 22 May, during which a British soldier, Lee Rigby, was brutally murdered by two individuals as he returned to his barracks.

You were on a bus and, spotting the victim, wasted no time in going to help him. With exceptional sangfroid, you confronted the two attackers and managed to get their attention by engaging them in conversation, asking them what their motives were and trying to get them to understand that their plan was futile.

For the 10 or so minutes that you were more or less talking privately to these two individuals, the British police were able to prepare to intervene, and your courage undoubtedly prevented these terrorists from attacking other people.

Our British friends paid tribute to this absolutely remarkable act of courage and devotion, and you were given exceptional press coverage in both the UK and France.

You have come to symbolize opposition to terrorism, but you are also an example of Franco-British friendship. In recognition of your bravery, the French Republic has decided to express the nation's gratitude to you.

Ingrid Loyau-Kennett, au nom du Ministre de l'Intérieur et en vertu des pouvoirs qui nous sont conférés, je vous remets la médaille d'argent de première classe pour acte de courage et de dévouement./.