



Ambassador's Activities

2013

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- Press and Communications Services -
58 Knightsbridge, SW1X 7JT London
E-Mail: press@ambafrance-uk.org
Web: www.ambafrance-uk.org

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

at the second training session
for young French and British diplomats
at the French Residence

14 May 2013

Foreign Secretary,

I/ It's a great honour to welcome you to the French Residence for this joint training session, the first in London for our young diplomats. It's a friendly French invasion, with 80 newcomers to the Quai d'Orsay. And it puts into practice your decision with Alain Juppé in July 2011, confirmed at the February 2012 summit, to ensure all new entrants to the FCO and the Quai d'Orsay spend time in Paris and London respectively.

II/ It's essential that we work together everywhere

- Firstly because we're two major powers, permanent members of the Security Council, NATO members, European Union members, and because together we define many of the EU's major foreign policy priorities, in partnership with Lady Ashton.
- Secondly because we can be inspired by each other's best practice. An independent panel in London said last year that French diplomacy was even better than British diplomacy, and as your Parliamentary Under Secretary says, we in Paris think it must be the other way round. Your second panel will be examining this issue in the coming days, and we're very interested in the conclusions you draw.
- Today we're committed to promoting our values and ideas worldwide, to give greater effectiveness to the economic and trade diplomacy that is a priority for both the FCO and the Quai d'Orsay under the impetus of our Minister, Laurent Fabius. That's why a whole training session with Lord Green has been dedicated to the subject, after a day on media skills.

We have similar problems and we willingly compare ourselves with you to try and improve our diplomatic network – all, Foreign Secretary, in a context of very satisfying bilateral relations.

Under your impetus and that of Laurent Fabius, we can point to extraordinary convergence on the major international issues: 75% of the Security Council's resolutions drawn up by our two countries; remarkable cooperation on energy, both nuclear and renewable; a shared vision and often shared goals in the G8 and G20 framework; and an exceptional defence partnership at a time when we'd like to improve Europe's security and defence policy.

For all these reasons, it's crucial for French and British diplomats to get to know each other even better and begin their careers together on joint training programmes. This is something we've been doing with the Germans since 2010, so it's been fundamentally important to do the same with you. On a personal note, in my 30-year career I've enjoyed special working relations with my British colleagues:

- In India, as Second Secretary, I played squash at the High Commission
- In Jordan, I tried, with some success, to gain an economic foothold
- In Lebanon, I and my remarkable colleague, James Watt, saw that justice prevailed between 2005 and 2007, in the wake of Rafiq Hariri's assassination, and we went on to secure the withdrawal of Syria's occupying troops
- In Turkey, my colleagues Nick Baird and David Reddaway and I promoted Europe's economic interests and those of our companies, particularly Airbus, despite our differences on Turkey's EU membership.

There's always a strong bond, a great deal of shared analysis, profound understanding and intelligence. And despite a thousand years of disagreements and wars, and countless pictures of Wellington, Nelson and the battles of Trafalgar and Waterloo adorning your government buildings, when we decide to work together we do so with remarkable understanding and effectiveness.

Thank you, Foreign Secretary, for being here, and thus demonstrating your commitment to this programme you helped instigate

- your commitment to the “new shoots” and the “crème de la crème” of British and French diplomacy

- and your commitment to our shared diplomatic work. I should like to conclude with an anecdote, something which one of your famous former prime ministers, Lord Palmerston, said, on meeting the French Ambassador./.