

Welcome speech by HE Bernard Emie  
at the reception for IHEDN course participants  
at the French Ambassador's Residence  
8 February 2012

Ministers,

Air Force Chief of Staff, *cher* Cher Sir Stephen,

*Monsieur le préfet*,

Officers and NCOs,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It's a great pleasure for me to welcome to the French Ambassador's Residence – on the occasion of this working visit to London by the *Institut des hautes études de Défense nationale* – such outstanding figures involved in Franco-British defence cooperation, the pillar of our joint action in the service of peace and security around the world.

Allow me to remind our British friends that the IHEDN is roughly the equivalent of your Royal College of Defence Studies. Its course participants hail from civil society or are elected representatives, people from the worlds of business in particular and government, and French and allied officers.

This diversity and this balance encourage often original thinking about national defence issues, as I was able to see in my discussions with the visiting fellows this afternoon. I emphasize that this multidisciplinary approach is all the more relevant because the strategic, industrial and political context in which our nations are having to operate is ever more complex and unstable.

It was in this same multidisciplinary spirit that President Sarkozy launched the work on our latest White Paper, in July 2007. And for the very same reasons, Prime Minister David Cameron pursued that thinking in the United Kingdom with the Strategic Defence and Security Review, published in October 2010.

Those two studies, conducted independently, reached very similar conclusions about the identification of risks, the responses to provide to them, and the reforms to carry out within our defence apparatuses.

A little more than a year after the signature of the Lancaster House treaties, and in the run-up to the Franco-British summit due to be held in Paris on 17 February on President Sarkozy's invitation, it seems to me useful to mention – in the presence of the leading British authorities honouring us with their presence – how far we have come since November 2010.

From March to October 2011, the operations conducted in Libya by the coalition demonstrated the full relevance of enhanced cooperation between two nations with such similar responsibilities, interests and capabilities. They enabled our forces to gain more mutual understanding and encouraged the development of an excellent climate of trust, a real brotherhood in arms. They also helped identify the fields in which it was necessary to make headway. As you know, we're determined to have a Combined Joint Expeditionary Force by 2016. The Libyan experience shows that command and control factors will play a decisive part in the success of this undertaking.

We also, of course, cooperate on military education, which is key to maintaining and developing our armed forces' expertise. The IHEDN's visit today is one of many examples of this.

I myself was invited on 26 January to speak at the Defence Academy in Shrivenham about "the Franco-British partnership for peace and security".

In the presence of officers who will be called upon to obey the most challenging commands and, in some cases, to become tomorrow's general officers, I recalled that, with our shared values and interests, it was only natural for us to combine our efforts. I stressed that the Libyan experience had proven how right we were – beyond all expectations.

Barely a few days ago, a delegation of nearly 100 officers from this year's class travelled to Paris, where – among other places – they visited the National Assembly, the Senate and the Ministry for Defence's Directorate for Strategic Affairs.

In this spirit of cooperation, the number of officer exchanges will be increased at all levels: tactical, operational and strategic. I won't go into the details, but allow me, *cher* Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Dalton, to welcome the strengthening of these exchanges, in fields as

varied as the planning and conduct of operations, fighter aircraft and training. Thank you in advance for making these officers welcome. You can be certain the French Defence Ministry will ensure that the British personnel in France receive the same welcome.

In the armaments field – the second pillar of our cooperation – we and the UK together account for 70% of Europe’s research and 50% of its procurement spending. The reforms we’ve undertaken must enable us to make savings and take advantage of all possible areas of cooperation. The challenges are considerable; the initiatives launched are many. They relate to both military procurement and support for exports. They are decisive for our defence industries, our independence and our jobs.

Cooperation is a demanding process, whichever partners are involved. We have to reach compromises which take into account different military and industrial cultures. This is inevitably more complicated than taking unilateral national decisions, but today we no longer have a choice. We must turn it to our advantage. As Peter Luff likes to say, “This is a marathon, not a sprint”.

At Lancaster House, we’ve already announced our intention to work together on a series of projects, some of which – such as the A400M and anti-ship missile – already existed, and others where teamwork led to innovations such as the MALE [Medium Altitude Long Endurance] UAV, the tactical UAV, and innovations in mine warfare and submarines. Some of these programmes touch on areas of sovereignty never shared until now. We’ve made rapid progress on each of them, despite the difficulties posed by an extremely constrained economic situation for both of us. The results, to date, are largely positive. After only one year, things are looking extremely promising.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Given the importance of our respective defence efforts, European defence will necessarily be powered by France and Britain. We are the only nations to have developed and maintained a comprehensive array of regularly employed, maintained and modernized capabilities. Above all, we can pride ourselves on our well trained and – for the most part, because of our commitments in external operations all around the world – seasoned military personnel.

The Franco-British partnership is without equal. We don't believe it is exclusive. On the contrary, it must create a knock-on effect on our partners in what we know is now a very constrained budgetary environment.

We're conscious that European defence is a sensitive issue for our British friends. Indeed we're sometimes at odds on the subject, for example at the July 2011 Foreign Affairs Council regarding the proposed European "headquarters" and the CSDP. But by working closely with each other and being aware of everything that brings us together, we finally reached a compromise. At the Foreign Affairs Council in December 2011, High Representative Catherine Ashton was mandated to look at ways of strengthening European defence capabilities and improving cooperation between the European Union and the Atlantic Alliance.

I welcome this compromise, which our foreign ministers confirmed in Brussels. This effort to revitalize European defence must continue without any preconceptions and without being exclusive.

I would like to thank our British friends again for coming to meet the IHEDN's visiting fellows. This is an excellent opportunity to share our views and forge ties within an extremely fruitful bilateral relationship.